Football Premiership: Blackburn 3 Leeds 4

Rovers' return is blocked by Leeds

David Lacey

BLACKBURN Rovers' hopes of resuming the game of leapfrog with Manchester United at the top of the Premiership that eventually brought the championship to Ewood Park three seasons ago stalled last Sunday when they lost a frenetic bout of snakes and ladders to Leeds United.

For the second time this season Ewood Park found itself knee-deep in goals, all seven arriving in the opening 32 minutes. Four weeks earlier, Blackburn led Sheffield Wednesday 5-1 at half-time and went on to win 7-2. Last Sunday Leeds, having established a 4-3 lead, organised themselves better defensively in the second half, especially during the last 12 minutes after Harry Kewell, their 18-year-old Australian winger, was sent off.

Blackburn's first defeat under Roy Hodgson leaves them in second place, three points behind United. Leeds have shot up from 17th to ninth after ending a run of three defeats, and no goals scored, with an imaginative attacking performance to mark George Graham's first year in charge.

Had the game continued in the vein of the opening half-hour the result would have looked more like a rugby score. In this period the defending was inept.

The shortcomings at the back were even more ruthlessly exposed by quick, skilful forwards who could dart between wooden defenders — Rod Wallace and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink for Leeds, Martin Dahlin and Kevin Gallacher for Blackburn.

The eccentricities of the defending were at times reflected in the refereeing of Steve Dunn, who seemed far readier to book and dismiss players than award some of the season's more obvious penalties. Perversely, the one Dunn gave was more questionable than those he refused.

The match had a grim little cameo involving Robert Molenaar, Leeds's Dutch defender, and Chris Sutton. Molenaar, built like a chucker-out at one of Amsterdam's dodgier nightclubs, fouled Sutton consistently and was eventually cautioned a few seconds after hurting a knee in a tackle with the same player.

Molenaar stayed off for the second half. Had he stayed on Leeds would surely have been a man short sooner than they were.

Both teams were committed to attack. Yet the freedom with which the goals were swapped did nothing to dispel the feeling that much of the defending in the Premiership is way below the standards of the old First Division.

Nevertheless, the spectacle was entertaining in its madcap way, and several of the goals were superbly taken. Only the first, which arrived in the third minute when Wallace pounced after Tim Flowers failed to hold a downward header from Hasselbaink, could even be partly blamed on a goalkeeper, and the crossfield pass from Gunnar Halle, sending Kewell to the left-hand byline for the centre, was memorable in itself.

Poor Blackburn marking at a corner allowed Molenaar to increase Leeds's lead three minutes later, but the Dutchman's half-volley was excellent. Within a minute Gallacher met Molenaar's clearance to beat Nigel Martyn with a resounding 30-yard shot.

On the quarter-hour Molenaar appeared, for once, to be the innocent party as Dahlin fell over trying to turn him. But the penalty was given and Sutton brought the scores level. Later, fouls in the area on Dahlin, by Halle and Molenaar, along with Colin Hendry's trip on Wallace, went unpunished.

In the 17th minute Kewell's run at the Blackburn defence left Wallace to regain the lead for Leeds with another outstanding shot. Five minutes later, Hasselbaink drew the defence on to him as one man before slipping the ball to an unmarked David Hopkin, who restored L[…] team's two-goal lead.

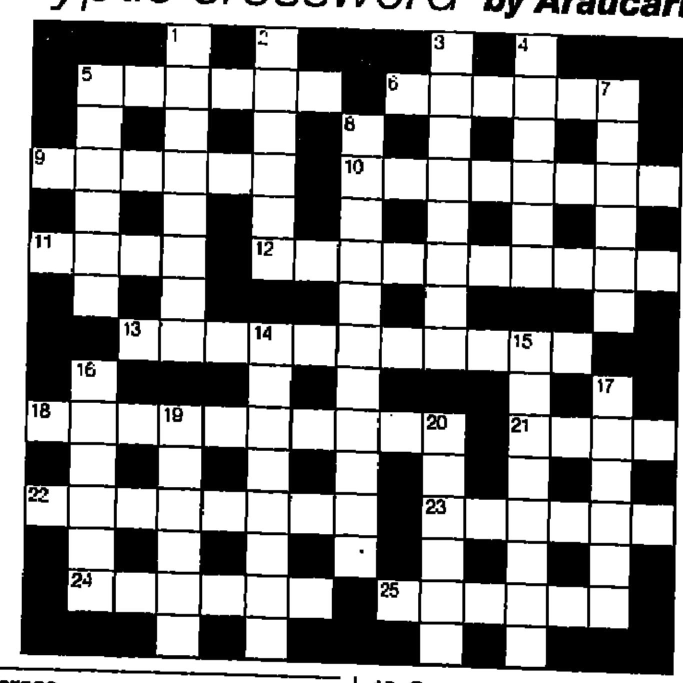
When Dahlin scored Blackbur[n's] third two minutes past the h[alf-] hour, spinning off Molenaar to b[eat] Martyn, Ewood began anticipating [a] famous Blackburn victory. But w[ith] Lucas Radebe back alongside Dav[id] Wetherall in defence, Leeds loo[ked] much tighter at the back.

Even after Kewell, had [been] booked in the first half for a foul [on] Gallacher, was dismissed for tim[e-] wasting at a free-kick, Blackbu[rn] still could not open up Leeds as th[ey] had done earlier.



Top Gunner: Ian Wright scores the first of his three goals in the 4-1 defeat of Bolton that saw the Arsenal striker break the club's 51-year-old goal-scoring record of 178 set by Cliff Bastin PHOTO: RICHARDS[…]

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

5 Pollution goes way out of London — there's a little in Scotland (6)
6 Feast for the wretched, eating before the starter (6)
9 Complete list of mineral deposits in the islands? (6)
10,11 I race with a pair to form part of such as . . . (8,4)
12 . . . Channel Islands flag wrapped in dummy by 5 down (5,5)
13 With entry of football club involved or not, the trick is temperance (4-7)
18 Game holds a flickering candle to an idol (6,4)
21,14 down 5 down's work, in fact, set out differently (4,3,5)
22 Abandoned performance in move towards socialism? (4,4)
23 Bird with divinity and intelligence (6)
24 Quote again before 11? (6)
25 Female was governor of church across the water (6)

Down

1 Union takes bearing starting with 1000, not 100 (8)
2 A worthy lot with a lot to stomach (6)
3 First division in the ring? (8)
4 Lament security surrounding bridge partners (6)
5 Salzburg man promoting "Car round Australia" (6)
7 Delicacy isn't common in its extremes (6)
8 5 down's lover's wrongdoing with eggs upset pub (3,8)
14 See 21
15 O for a chance to go West! (8)
16 Regrets work exalted by one that's affected (6)
17 Want to climb a steeple? (6)
19 Remove the aide-de-camp when out of order (6)
20 25's paper's 1 is 5 down's (6)

Last week's solution

H		E		D		F		P		M		E		D
A	U	S	T	R	A	L	I	A		E	L	D	E	R
N		T		A		A		P		C		W		A
D	R	O	U	G	H	T		E	C	H	O	I	N	G
C		N		O				R		A		N		
U	N	I	O	N		A	T	T	E	N	D	A	N	T
F		A				R		I		I				O
F	I	N	I	S	H	I	N	G	S	C	H	O	O	L
E				T		S		E				F		E
D	E	C	O	R	A	T	O	R		I	N	F	E	R
		U		E		O				S		I		A
S	A	T	A	N	I	C		P	E	L	I	C	A	N
A		T		G		R		A		A		I		C
S	W	E	E	T		A	D	V	A	N	T	A	G	E
H		R		H		T		E		D		L		S

Golf Lancôme Trophy

O'Meara's Ryder warning

David Davies in St Nom-la-Bretêche

MARK O'MEARA, the only American Ryder Cup player competing, sent all the right signals home when he won the Lancôme Trophy here last Sunday. With the matches due to take place in Valderrama, Spain, at the end of this month the 40-year-old beat a European contingent of six, with the best of them, Lee Westwood, six shots behind.

O'Meara's total of 271, 13 under par, was one better than that of Jarmo Sandelin, a Swede who began with three bogeys in his first four holes and then played the remainder in seven under.

The Australians Greg Norman, the world No 1, and Peter O'Malley, the world No 101, shared third place.

O'Meara, who has won twice in the United States this year, took his second tournament in Europe; the previous one was a Lawrence Batley event in 1987. He looked close to cracking in the last two holes when he drove deep into the woods on the left at the 17th. But he was fortunate to have a shot out, hit an approach on to the back fringe and hole from 35 feet for a par.

At the short 18th he missed the green and was 18 yards from the pin. But he hit a little chip over a bunker that almost went in the hole, finishing three inches away, and that gave him victory.

The six surviving Ryder Cup players met with mixed fortunes on the final day. Westwood was the best of them, with a bogey-free 67 for 277, but Ian Woosnam and Jesper Parnevik had 73s for level par, 284. Woosnam said: "Those were four of the worst rounds that I've played in years. I'm going back to my old clubs next week and I will be using them at Valderrama."

Per-Ulrik Johansson's 72, for 280, was disappointing and Colin Montgomerie was very unhappy with 69, for 281. "By my standards," said the Scotsman, "that was a poor performance."

But it was not bad enough to relieve him of No 1 ranking in Europe thanks to an extraordinary lapse by Bernhard Langer at the innocuous 9th, a drive and pitch for these players. The only trouble is a small pond to the left of the green and Langer, normally reliable, found it twice to run up a quadruple-bogey eight!

His 75 for 279 meant he did not finish far enough ahead of Montgomerie to wipe out the $10,000 he was behind at the outset.

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The Washington Post Le Monde

Police officers remove protesters from the rail track close to the nuclear power plant of Kruemmel, near Geesthacht in northern Germany, last Sunday after several hundred people tried to damage the rails to prevent used nuclear fuel being shipped from the plant PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL PROBST

Clinton rejects UN plea to pay dues

Ian Black in New York

KOFI ANNAN, the United Nations secretary-general, made an impassioned appeal to member states this week to back his reform plans and pay their dues, but he was immediately rebuffed by President Bill Clinton, who insisted on a new financial deal.

Seeking to inject a note of urgency at the start of the annual three-week debate by the General Assembly on Monday, Mr Annan called for a "reform assembly" that would "re-imagine the role of the UN, giving it new life for the new century".

Opening his first General Assembly debate, Mr Annan said: "When I launched my reform plan, I pledged to narrow the gap between aspiration and achievement at the United Nations. I say to you today that we must close another gap: between the rhetoric and the reality of a common world.

"Now I ask you, the member states, to act. Some of you I ask to do what your legal obligations require: to liquidate your arrears and to pay your future assessments in full, on time and without conditions."

But Mr Clinton ignored his plea, repeating only that he would work to "pay off the bulk" of the United States' $1.6 billion arrears, although he is unlikely to go beyond the $800-$900 million offer already rejected as "half a loaf".

The president had little choice but to praise the "remarkable" $1 billion gift made last week by the media mogul Ted Turner — an embarrassing contrast to what is widely seen as Uncle Sam's parsimony. The founder of CNN, whose wealth was estimated at $3.2 billion before his donation to the UN, challenged other billionaires to follow suit.

Mr Clinton praised Mr Annan, but refused to accept his terms. "This year we have an opportunity to put the question of debts and dues behind us once and for all and to put the United Nations on a sounder financial footing for the future," he said.

"I have made it a priority to work with our Congress on legislation that would allow us to pay off the bulk of our arrears and assure full financing of America's assessment in the years ahead . . . At the same time we look to member states to adopt a more equitable scale of assessment."

Congress wants the US contribution reduced from 25 per cent to 20 per cent of the total budget — an idea rejected even by loyal allies such as Britain. The UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, was expected to urge prompt and unconditional payment in his General Assembly speech on Tuesday and is likely to speak more strongly in private talks with the US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright.

If the debate goes well, Mr Annan will win authority from the assembly for more control over his budget, and will use the savings to create a development fund.

Meanwhile members of the UN Security Council were due to hold urgent consultations after Arab states voted to defy the international community and ignore sanctions imposed on Libya because of the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr Annan was said to be furious about last Saturday's surprise Arab League decision. Diplomats called it a "major problem" and said it could undermine other controversial UN sanctions, such as those against Iraq.

The Arab League explicitly called on its 21 members to ease the 1992 air embargo — part of a wider package of sanctions — by allowing humanitarian and religious flights in and out of Libya. It also invited them to lift a freeze on Libyan bank accounts, except for oil funds.

In the past, some Arab countries have ignored the ban or insisted that Libya had acted unilaterally in breaching it, but the UN will clearly have to confront the decision. "The credibility of the Security Council is on the line," one UN official said.

Arab resentment at the Libyan sanctions has been building up, but the US and Britain, the leading "hawks", have given no sign of backing down. Arab countries, especially Egypt, are frustrated by the firm Anglo-American rejection of a Libyan offer to hand the suspects over for trial in a neutral state.

The sanctions were imposed in 1992 because of Muammar Gadafy's refusal to hand over two Libyan intelligence officers wanted by the US and Britain in connection with the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1989, which killed 270 people.

Doctors to be guinea pigs in trials of HIV vaccine

Martin Kettle in Washington

AN INTERNATIONAL group of doctors said this week it would try to accelerate the fight against Aids by volunteering to become human guinea pigs in a trial of a vaccine containing the HIV virus.

The announcement immediately triggered extensive offers from members of the United States public to join the volunteer group.

Some 50 members from several countries of the Chicago-based International Association of Physicians in Aids Care said that they had signed a pledge offering themselves as volunteers in tests of the attenuated viral vaccine, a genetically weakened version of the vaccine.

Other Aids charities immediately urged caution. But the Chicago group insisted that its proposal was not a publicity stunt. "We cannot sit around after 16 years and continue to debate how quickly we can do trials," said Gordon Nary, the association's executive director and one of the volunteers.

"There are 8,000 new cases of Aids a day, and 1,000 children a day are born with the disease," he said. "A vaccine is the only significant type of scientific intervention that is going to have any impact."

Dr Nary said the group had been swamped with offers to join the programme. Aids organisations were compiling lists. "It has touched a nerve among the public," he said.

Aids vaccine development is a slow process because of the safety measures and rigorous animal testing which are observed before humans are injected with a trial vaccine. Research in the past decade has tended to focus on vaccines which do not involve a live strain of the HIV virus, because of fears that even a weakened strain might cause Aids or other complications.

Advocates of the human guinea pig programme say Dr Ronald Desrosiers, of the Harvard Medical School, has developed a vaccine that seems to protect monkeys from the primate-equivalent of HIV. The group wants to use that vaccine in its experiment.

"We are not calling for a trial tomorrow, or even the next day," the Chicago group's deputy director, Joe Zuniga, said on Monday. "We want there to be enough safety protocols in place for this not to harm anybody." But Dr Zuniga said that "bold steps should be taken while observing good science".

The researchers will have to obtain permission from the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) before going ahead with the plan on a nationwide basis. It may, however, be legal to proceed within the state of Illinois — whose laws govern Chicago — more quickly. Another option is to conduct the research outside the US.

The Chicago group wants approval from the National Institutes of Health and the FDA. But the volunteers made clear that they intended to find a way of going ahead with the experiment anyway.

Solidarity wins back power

THE revamped Solidarity movement emerged the clear victor from last Sunday's parliamentary elections in Poland, with about 34 per cent of the vote against the ruling ex-communist Democratic Left Alliance's (SLD) 26.5 per cent, *writes Neil Bowder in Warsaw.*

The poll showed the pro-market Freedom Union (UW) coming a strong third with nearly 14 per cent of the vote.

The result, if confirmed later this week, is a spectacular success for Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS), a loose alliance between Solidarity and a host of small anti-communist parties.

The pact campaigned for a renewal of traditional Catholic and family values and promised the decommunisation of public life. It also promised to enfranchise the poor in the country's free-market economy and to halt "dishonest" privatisation.

It was a personal victory for the AWS leader, the trade union chief Marian Krzaklewski, whose diet of populist economics and anti-communist invective raised eyebrows and provoked criticism from the liberal press.

But it appeared to be precisely what was required to snatch last-minute votes from the agrarian Polish Peasants' Party and the nationalist Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland.

Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

A parliament that Scotland deserves

EIGHTEEN years of arrogant one-party government, during which time the people of Scotland were used as guinea pigs for the imposition of a head tax that proved just as unpopular south of the border, has been fully rewarded with a decisive vote in favour of a Scottish parliament (Scotland says a resounding Yes, September 21). The Conservative party has now suffered two crushing defeats at the hands of an electorate that has never taken to the main tenets of Thatcherism.

If its new leader is ever to regain credibility for his party, he must realise that the people of Scotland are now masters of their own destiny over vast areas of governance hitherto the exclusive reserve of Westminster.
W R Jackson,
West Bridgford, Nottingham

SCOTLAND FORWARD united those who were campaigning for a Yes vote to a Scottish parliament — but its membership did not include political parties alone. A whole range of campaign groups — including the Campaign for a Scottish Parliament, Charter 88 Scotland and Democracy for Scotland — were also members of Scotland Forward.

It is at least in part the activities of these groups that put pressure on the Labour government to set a date for the Scottish referendum so soon after winning the election. And it is popular pressure that will go on reminding the Government at Westminster, as well as those MPs elected to our new parliament here in Scotland, to continue reforming our democracy. A parliament for Scotland is not an end — it is just a beginning.
Andrew Burns,
Secretary, Charter 88 Scotland,
Edinburgh

NOW the Scots have voted for a tax-raising parliament in the knowledge that the outcome is likely to be an increase in direct taxation for redistributive purposes, this is the perfect opportunity to lay to rest once and for all the myth of Scottish stinginess.
Walter Cairns,
Manchester

I WOULD like to express a personal debt of gratitude to Margaret Thatcher. Over 20 years, by her words and her actions, she did more to galvanise and unite the Scottish people than any other person since Edward Plantagenet in the late 13th century.
Brian Henry,
Glasgow

Burning issue of progress

ROBERT KAISER correctly mentions burning in the plantation industry and by lowland rice farmers as factors contributing to the present sickly smoke haze that hangs over much of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore (Forests of Borneo going up in smoke, September 14). However, mention should also be made of the millions of upland farmers throughout the region who use fire to convert fallow vegetation into ash to provide their subsistence crops with plant nutrients.

Many international advisers continue to promote "low external input" and "organic" farming methods developed for use by the surplus-ridden economies of Europe among Southeast Asia's poorest farmers, who remain isolated from the region's recent economic development. Yet, without access to mineral fertilisers, farmers will continue to slash and burn their way through the remains of Southeast Asia's tropical forest treasures.

Asia's leaders should read with care the messages contained in their farmers' smoke signals if the present environmental disaster is to be avoided in future.
(Dr) Thomas Fairhurst,
Singapore

A SINGLE issue of your paper (September 14) has an article enviously praising the economic success of East Asian countries (Education ethos fails practical test) and, on another page, one saying that the environment in Asian countries is the worst in the world. The two stories complement each other: the "success" of the tiger economies has been at the expense of their environment. (Sadly Asian corporations have helped finance similar destruction in many Third World countries.)

There is an urgent need to stop talking about "economic success" in the abstract and to start thinking about how to succeed in improving the quality of life of all people.
Lois Griffiths,
Christchurch, New Zealand

IT TURNS out that the "tigers" of Asia and Latin America were merely pet kittens of capitalism. In Asia they served the dual purpose of providing cheap labour and sites for military bases to ring China. Mexico and Brazil only provided the former.

In addition, both have served as a lure — dangled before the neo-élite of the "need-based" countries — to follow the greed-based capitalist form of development regardless of the consequences to the poverty-stricken masses.

The inevitable collapse of these artificially overheated economies, which opened their doors to multinationals, has resulted in these tigers becoming an endangered species that now need to be kept alive by the injection of IMF funds.
N H Antia,
Bombay, India

The present and the past

IT IS a bit rich for the British prime minister's speech-writer to insist that unions modernise along the lines of the Labour party (TUC "must modernise", September 21). One can only assume that the scribbler was one of the more jejune members of his backroom staff for whom even recent history is an annoying irrelevance, or who may still have been in school when Labour's union affiliates initiated and paid for the party's organisational reforms in the 1980s — a precondition of Tony Blair's subsequent success.

In many respects, it was the unions' own modernisation which prompted and inspired Labour's structural reforms. The TUC's relaunch and restructuring followed a pioneering strategic review conducted through the Cranfield School of Management. In many other respects, unions have been ahead of Labour in using innovative management techniques and marketing strategies and adopting organisational reforms.

The TUC lacks the directive powers and sanctions available to the Labour leadership. The trade union movement is considerably more complex and diverse than any political party, and reforming and reviving organised labour is an altogether more daunting task than many can imagine.
Michael Allen,
Cranfield School of Management,
Cranfield, Bedford

JONATHAN FREEDLAND'S characterisation of Tony Blair's first 100 days in office (Blair juggernaut buffets friends and foes alike, August 17) raises disturbing historical echoes. Are we in fact on the eve of the 21st century or are we in the early 1930s? Is the government really "New Labour" or is it a "National" coalition? Is Mr Blair the prime minister, or is it the ghosts of Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin uncomfortably merged in one body? Even the term "100 days" echoes the 1930s and Franklin Roosevelt's first administration (and Kennedy's), and suggests how deeply American metaphors have now colonised political and media discourse.

Is neo-liberalism with a human face really the best alternative to clapped out Thatcherism or Reaganism? If so, it does not cast a complimentary light on the creative powers or vision of our leaders.
Nigel Tappin,
Dwight, Ontario, Canada

Collapse of a House of cards

THE establishment might well attempt to use Princess Diana's death to rehabilitate the monarchy, by making use of the nation's spontaneous sympathy. Her tragic fate is, however, surely more likely to result in the rapid demise of the House of Windsor once the public realises that, with the one vibrant and inspiring member of the royal circle now gone, Britain faces the unhappy prospect of being ruled by an outdated pack of cardboard cut-out figures.
D B Stuart,
Frankfurt, Germany

IT IS always a tragedy when a young life is claimed by a road accident, but I cannot agree with Glyn Welden (September 7) when he says we are all to blame for Diana's death, which was patently the direct result of drunken driving.

Many people have only a political or historical interest in the Windsor family and no time for the trivialities published about them. I too, feel sorry for her innocent sons, as I do for the 300 innocent villagers who were being tortured and murdered in Algeria at about the same time.
Stuart Dabbs,
Alicante, Spain

THE PRESS have been describing Diana as "The People's Princess". Is this an oxymoron or oxymoronic?
Norman Temple,
Edmonton, Canada

Briefly

IN HIS swansong as Guardian correspondent in Washington (Bye bye boomers, hello Brussels, September 14), Martin Walker writes: ". . . baby-boomers began leaving their colleges and their anti-war demos for the real world". So he doesn't think protests against the Vietnam war were of the "real world"? And people who demonstrated against this atrocity were neither mature nor realistic?
Dana Cook,
Toronto, Canada

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES would have been amazed had he known that Jonathan Freedland (September 7) was going to list him among "British socialism's best and brightest". Keynes devoted his considerable talent to saving capitalism by forestalling socialism. Marx may have dedicated Capital to Darwin, but he didn't make the (now fashionable) mistake of confusing biological and social evolution. He had no truck with eugenic engineering. Nor did William Morris, arguably the most clear-sighted (and far-sighted) of British socialists. Morris's socialism — green and humanist — has more resonance today than the pseudo-scientific notions of Wells, Shaw and the Webbs.
David Grove,
Holt, Norfolk

JIM GEORGE says and cares less about the state of English cricket or the British tabloid press than he does about his own stereotypical and outdated images of the country he so painfully loves, Australia (August 31). An analysis of the faults of the English cricket team is not helped by invoking the image of Australians knocked down and bleeding at the feet of their opponents — in any case, an image all too familiar to the All Blacks and their supporters. Australia has moved on and Mr George needs to move on with it.
Geoff Cordell,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

LINDA GRANT'S article, "Throw in the towel, chaps" (August 31), reminds me of the most wonderful piece of graffiti I saw a few years ago in the West End of Glasgow. It read: "War is menstruation envy."
Dorothy B Sutherland,
Chicago, USA

ALAN FAIRHURST asks why decriminalisation should be a solution to the drug problem, while the handgun problem requires a total ban (September 14). If I light up a big spliff, point it at Mr Fairhurst and take a big drag on it, he doesn't get high.
Ian MacDougall,
Tokyo, Japan

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Congo blocks UN inquiry on massacre

Chris McGreal in Johannesburg

THE government of former Zaire has blocked the United Nations' latest attempt to investigate massacres of refugees during this year's rebellion against Mobutu Sese Seko, putting into jeopardy the entire mission and crucial foreign aid.

The rechristened Congo refused to permit investigators to travel to the northern town of Mbandaka last week, where hundreds of Rwandan Hutu refugees were killed on the docks of the river port, 500km north of Kinshasa, as Laurent Kabila's rebel army neared victory in May.

"We are not going to Mbandaka. The government has maintained objections which exclude our going," the UN spokesman, José Díaz, said after talks with the Congolese government.

The UN has warned that its 23-member investigation team has waited in Kinshasa for a month for permission to travel to an estimated 100 massacre sites, mainly in eastern Congo, reinforcing charges that the government is buying time to destroy the evidence.

UN officials say that unless permission is granted swiftly, the entire mission is likely to pull out. "It's in peril, it's in danger," Mr Díaz said.

The final decision will be made by the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan.

The UN investigation was ordered amid growing evidence of the slaughter of Rwandan Hutu refugees who failed to return to their homeland after the invasion of Zaire by Rwanda's overwhelmingly Tutsi army in support of Mr Kabila's rebellion.

The continuing rift over the investigation is likely to lead the United States and the European Union to reconsider aid to the vast, beleaguered country. The US says it is keen to resume aid to Congo, but it has publicly tied further aid to respect for human rights and a proper investigation of the alleged massacres.

Smoke pours from a bus being used by a party of German tourists after a petrol bomb was thrown into it outside the Egyptian Museum in Cairo last week. Ten people were killed and 24 hurt in the attack by suspected Muslim fundamentalists, who also opened fire on the passengers PHOTOGRAPH: REUTER

Khatami attacks US threat

Kathy Evans

IRAN'S new moderate president, Mohammed Khatami, reverted to traditional revolutionary language on Monday and condemned the United States presence in the Gulf as a threat to Iran's stability.

Speaking to a huge rally of élite troops in Tehran's Azadi Square, the president said the presence of "enemy" fleets in the Gulf was "illegitimate, a threat to regional stability and the system of Iran's Islamic republic". "As long as there are threats, we must keep ready. Our armed forces should stay powerful," he said.

The speech marked the start of the "sacred defence week" commemorating the start of Iran's eight-year war with Iraq, in which 1 million Iranians died.

The US has an estimated 20 warships in the region and several thousand troops stationed in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain. Many analysts see the close proximity of these hostile navies in the narrow Gulf waters as an accident waiting to happen. Iranians, on the other hand, believe the US presence is designed to thwart Iranian efforts to improve their relations with the Gulf states.

Iran plans to embark on extensive naval exercises in the northern Gulf next month. This week 200,000 troops were expected to conduct manoeuvres near the holy city of Qom, using live ammunition.

President Khatami also condemned as a threat to regional stability the forthcoming naval exercises in the eastern Mediterranean scheduled by the US, Israel and Turkey. Several Arab states share his view, seeing the military presence as a boost to Israel's strength.

Last weekend, Iran's ally Russia moved to calm US fears about Iranian nuclear ambitions. In talks in Moscow with the US energy secretary, Federico Pena, the Russian atomic energy minister, Viktor Mikhailov, offered to establish a joint US-Russian team to inspect Iran's nuclear installations.

Washington wants Russia to abandon the help it is giving to a nuclear plant in southern Iran.

But Iranian specialists said the Russian offer of a joint inspection had been made without any consultation with Iran, and that Tehran was highly unlikely to allow US inspectors into the country.

Monday's rally virtually required the president to reaffirm his anti-American credentials. The occasion was attended by thousands of veterans and martyrs' families, once considered the most loyal supporters of the Islamic revolution, forces now often neglected in Iran's drive to improve its economy and relationship with the West.

When Mr Khatami came to power last month there were hopes that he would improve relations with the US and Europe. Such ambitions sit uncomfortably with the still-powerful hardliners backed by the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

● Iraq has asked the United Nations to help secure the return of more than 140 Iraqi aircraft flown to Iran for safekeeping during the Gulf war, saying Iran was now making use of the planes.

Kohl gains as SPD falters

Denis Staunton in Berlin

HELMUT KOHL'S hopes of winning a record fifth term as chancellor next year were raised last weekend when the opposition Social Democrats polled their worst result since the second world war in a state election in Hamburg.

The result is a blow to the Social Democrats (SPD), who had adopted a strategy, borrowed from the British prime minister, Tony Blair, of promising tough action on crime and a more business-friendly economic policy.

Henning Voscherau, Hamburg's SPD mayor, resigned unexpectedly, saying he felt rejected by the voters. "We did not achieve our election aims . . . and the result is bitter," he said.

Official results gave the SPD 36.2 per cent of the vote and Mr Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) 30.7 per cent, an increase of 6 per cent on their 1993 result. The Greens scored 13.9 per cent — showing little change from 1993.

The German People's Union (DVU), an extreme-right party, polled 4.9 per cent, just failing to clear the 5 per cent hurdle that would have won it its first seats in the city's state parliament.

SPD leaders did not hide their disappointment with the outcome of the election, which marks the start of a year of campaigning before the general election.

"The SPD said they wanted to send a warning to Kohl. What's come out of it is a warning for the SPD and support for Kohl," said the local CDU chairman, Dirk Fischer.

The SPD remains the strongest party in Hamburg and will almost certainly lead the next city government, probably in coalition with the Greens. But the result is a major blow to Mr Voscherau, who had hoped to become finance minister in a future national SPD government.

Israeli homes deal scorned

Julian Borger in Jerusalem

THREE families of Jewish settlers were reported to have left contested houses they were occupying in Arab East Jerusalem last week, after an agreement with the Israeli government. But a Palestinian official rejected the deal as phoney after it was announced that Jewish theological students would remain in the settlement.

Witnesses said the settlers, who moved in on September 14, had slipped out of the back door but 10 students and a spokeswoman remained behind. Earlier, Palestinian crowds had thrown stones and petrol bombs at the occupied houses.

Ahmed Tibi, an adviser to the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, said: "The Israeli government gave the seal of approval to a provocative presence in East Jerusalem. [The deal] is a trick."

Palestinians living near the site in Ras al-Amoud have warned of riots if the crisis is not resolved. Most Palestinians see East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state and regard Jewish settlement there as a blow to their aspirations of independence. "The solution is to stop it. Patience has its limits," Mr Arafat said in Gaza.

Israel's public security minister, Avigdor Kahalani, said that under the government's deal with the settlers, 10 students from a *yeshiva* [Jewish seminary] would "guard and maintain" the houses.

Radical rightwing Jews have backed the settlement. They represent an important force in Binyamin Netanyahu's coalition government.

● An Israeli man whose apparent kidnapping by Palestinian extremists triggered a manhunt and the intervention of the US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, has admitted that he staged his own abduction.

Yaakov Schwartz said he acted under the influence of a "messianic revelation" a few weeks ago, convinced that his disappearance would "unify" Israelis in anger and deepen their resolve to combat terrorism.

Washington Post, page 16

The Week

DEBORAH Parry, one of two British nurses in Saudi Arabia charged with murdering an Australian colleague, has been found guilty and sentenced to death, lawyers for the victim said, although the report was denied by the UK Foreign Office. Lucille McLauchlan, the other nurse, was sentenced to flogging and eight years in prison.

THE US spurned pressure to back a worldwide ban on anti-personnel land-mines, saying its security would be compromised if it signed the treaty.
Washington Post, page 15

CHINA revealed the line-up of a new Communist Party politburo, confirming Zhu Rongji, a former Shanghai mayor, as the next prime minister.
Washington Post, page 15

THE Russian parliament overwhelmingly passed a law severely restricting religious activity, provoking alarm from minority faiths and showing the growing influence of the Orthodox Church.

SLOBODAN Milosevic's leftist bloc led in Serbia's presidential and parliamentary elections but faced an unsavoury choice of a coalition partner to secure power for another four years. His Socialist alliance was followed closely by the hardline nationalist Radical party.

THE former Zimbabwean president, Canaan Banana, has gone on trial in Harare on charges of homosexual rape.

ALBANIA'S prime minister, Fatos Nano, appealed for calm after a member of his Socialist party, allegedly shot and seriously wounded a political rival in the parliament building.

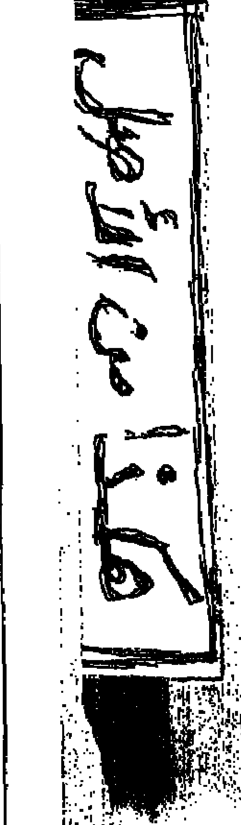
GUNMEN killed five Iranian air force technicians and their Pakistani driver in Rawalpindi. A sixth Iranian was injured in the attack.

FRANCE signalled that is ready to scale down its dependence on atomic energy and re-evaluate its benefits in a drastic departure after 25 years of pro-nuclear policies.
Le Monde, page 13

SWITZERLAND froze the bank accounts of Pakistan's ex-prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, and her family after Islamabad accused them of lodging $1.5 billion abroad.

FOUR women have been nominated in Ireland to succeed Mary Robinson as president.
All female line-up, page 25

NIKE, the sportswear firm, cut ties with four Indonesian contractors in a row over wages and working conditions.



Forest fire smog chokes S E Asia

John Gittings

THE pollution haze from uncontrolled forest fires threatening parts of Southeast Asia may last till the end of the year, Indonesia — the source of the problem — has admitted.

The smog closed Kuching airport in the Malaysian part of Borneo on Monday and people in Singapore have been advised to wear face masks.

Satellite pictures using infrared imaging suggest that forest fires in Indonesian Kalimantan involve not only tree foliage but tree trunks buried six feet underground.

Schools were shut and few turned up for work on Monday in Malaysia's rainforest state of Sarawak, across the Borneo border from Kalimantan. Kuching airport, which had reopened briefly last Sunday, was forced to close again. Seven other airports in Borneo have closed and Royal Brunei Airlines cancelled flights.

Flights were also cancelled in the southern Philippines because of smoke drifting from Indonesia.

Relief flights to Irian Jaya, the Indonesian half of New Guinea — where more fires are reported to be burning — have also been halted by thick smoke. The official Antara news agency said that at least 250 people in remote mountain villages had died of starvation or cholera.

The air pollutant index in Kuching reached a high of 655 before last weekend and was still over 500 on Monday. Levels fell in Singapore, but it was officially described as "a brief respite".

A day's exposure to an index level of 200-300 is roughly equivalent to smoking 20 cigarettes, according to experts.

The Malaysian defence minister, Syed Hamid, said last Sunday that the fires covered an area as big as peninsular Malaysia. About 400 firemen were being lent to Indonesia. Air force planes were trying to induce rain by cloud-seeding, to lessen the haze.

Embarrassed Indonesian diplomats in Kuala Lumpur claimed that the haze was a rare phenomenon brought on by abnormally dry weather resulting from the 1997 El Niño effect. They said the dry season was expected to last until November or December instead of ending this month as usual.

Indonesia has now revoked the licences of Indonesian logging and plantation companies suspected of clearing huge tracts of land and burning the unwanted surplus timber. But Kuala Lumpur's anger is blunted by the knowledge that more than 40 companies with land cultivation licences issued by Jakarta have Malaysian joint-venture partners.

Though Jakarta has laws to punish offenders, the environment minister admitted last week that they had not been enforced.

The non-governmental Indonesia Forum for the Environment said it was planning a private prosecution, on the grounds that the fires could be regarded as arson.

The pollution haze forced President Suharto of Indonesia to apologise to neighbouring countries last week when environment ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations were meeting in Jakarta.

Gulf of Thailand
South China Sea
Strait of Malacca
MALAYSIA
Kuala Lumpur
Sarawak
Kuching
SINGAPORE
BORNEO
Kalimantan
SUMATRA
INDONESIA
Java Sea
Jakarta
JAVA
Area of fires
400km



Spectacular flames rise from an oil refinery in the southeast Indian port of Visakhapatnam after a blast that killed at least 37 people

Illegals to get free health care

John Hooper in Rome

ILLEGAL immigrants in the region around Venice are to be offered free medical treatment. It is believed to be the first initiative of its kind in Europe and is an outstanding example of why Italy, with its generous welfare provision and lenient immigration laws, has become a favoured destination for migrants from the Third World.

But to its sponsors it is more a question of enlightened self-interest: there are growing — and, experts say, unjustified — fears in Italy that clandestine immigrants pose a health risk.

Announcing the scheme this week, the councillor responsible for health in Veneto's right-of-centre regional government, Iles Braghetto, said: "We want to ensure we do not suffer consequences from the presence of people who, bearing in mind the way in which they enter, could pose dangers to our community."

He said the regional authorities would hand out up to 10,000 cards entitling the recipients to free medical treatment. The cards, which open out into larger sheets, will also serve as portable medical records, carrying details of any conditions the holders may have and how they have been treated.

Mr Braghetto said that judging by the results of a pilot scheme the preventive effects could save the region about $5.8 million a year in hospital bills.

But the scheme has also inspired deep misgivings in Italy's partners in the European Union, many of whom are dissatisfied with the laxity of its immigration rules. Next month Italy is due to start implementing the so-called Schengen agreement on passport-free movement in Europe. By April 1, immigrants who succeed in reaching Italy will be able to cross into France and Austria without hindrance.

For the moment at least, clandestine immigration — as distinct from immigrant trafficking — is not an offence in Italy.

Hanoi blames officials as unrest grows

Adrian Edwards in Hanoi

VIETNAM'S official army newspaper last week issued a frank report on 10 years of unrest and moral decline in central areas, blaming inept officialdom and the market economy.

A lengthy editorial in the daily Quan Doi Nhan Dan offered a rare glimpse through the veil of secrecy that surrounds scores of vaguely reported incidents since the late 1980s in an area considered the cradle of Vietnam's revolution.

It catalogued problems across a region, "Military Zone Four", extending from central Quang Binh province to Thanh Hoa in the north. It called for decisive action to bolster grassroots ideological controls and lift public confidence in a "morally upright" government.

"Together with making clear to the people the mistakes and wrongdoings of party units, authorities, cadres and party members, we should quickly expose and make ineffective persons who have caused disorder and incited people," it said.

The newspaper wrote at length about issues ranging from corruption among officials and Communist party members to the re-emergence of historical feuds between families and localities, as well as increasing social vices. It wrote of "growing discontent", "complex situations" and "political instability", and said traditional moral standards had been allowed to fall.

"During the reform process, when the negative side of the market economy has penetrated all fields of life, all corners of rural and urban areas, many complicated incidents occurred in the area of Military Zone Four, including some which were serious," it said.

The editorial described a series of incidents, some of which it said were the work of "hostile forces" — a term Hanoi routinely uses for groups seeking to undermine its control. It said officials had in many cases failed to respond adequately to popular concerns.

The military newspaper's report follows widespread unrest over corruption in northern Thai Binh province, a coastal rice-growing area to the southeast of the capital.

It also comes before a critical top-level decision on the appointment this week of successors to President Le Duc Anh and the prime minister, Vo Van Kiet, both of whom are stepping down. — *AP*

French bishops to admit collusion with Nazis

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

A MOVE by the French Roman Catholic Church to acknowledge its support for anti-Semitic laws during the second world war is being interpreted as an early sign that the Pope intends to apologise for the Vatican's collusion with the Nazis.

The French Church's decision to stage a ceremony next week on the site of the Drancy deportation camp near Paris is seen as a triumph for the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, who is a converted Jew and a strong contender for the next papacy.

During the unprecedented ceremony on September 30, the bishop of St Denis, which includes Drancy, will read a statement about the "the attitude of the bishops of France during the war".

Historians have repeatedly pointed out that the Roman Catholic Church in France failed to condemn anti-Jewish laws passed by the Vichy government in 1940. The measures banned Jews from owning property and from exercising professions such as law, medicine and teaching. From 1942, when large-scale deportations from France began, the laws made it easier for the police to trace Jews.

News of next week's statement follows a decision by the Vatican to call an international symposium entitled "Christians and anti-Semitism" in Rome at the end of October.

The symposium, which will be attended by cardinals, theologians and historians, will look at the second world war and at Christian persecution of Jews during the 15th century Spanish Inquisition. More controversially for the Church, it will look at allegations that the Vatican bankrolled German Nazis.

The symposium will report to the Pope, who has promised to produce a document on the subject. This could be followed by a formal apology.

According to Serge Klarsfeld, a prominent Jewish lawyer and campaigner for fuller information about the French war years, the statement to be made on September 30 is "very strong". He said: "The statement goes very much further than anyone had expected. If anything, it almost exaggerates the role of the Roman Catholic Church after the occupation in 1940."

About 75,000 Jews, out of a total of 320,000, were deported from France to Nazi death camps. Of those who were deported, only about 2,500 returned.

Mr Klarsfeld said that French people had put up more resistance to Nazi laws than those in countries such as Denmark, Belgium and Italy.

But he added that the fervently anti-communist Church had supported Marshal Philippe Pétain, the Vichy leader, for his espousal of values such as "work, family, country".

On October 8, the trial begins in Bordeaux of Maurice Papon, aged 87, a former government minister who is accused of crimes against humanity for his alleged role in sending 1,560 Jews to their deaths between 1942 and 1944.

On Monday, Mgr Louis-Marie Billé, the president of the French bishops' conference, said: "It is time the Church took charge of the sins of its children." He added that repentance was a key aspect of the 1994 Vatican guidelines urging Roman Catholics to be reconciled with religious groups which have suffered because of the Church's intolerance or indifference.

Media barons tame Russia's press

James Meek in Moscow

THE BANKERS put their intentions delicately, recalled Anatoly Kostyukov. Only as the journalists were about to sign away their newspaper to the emissaries from Bank Imperial did they realise what the new owners had in mind.

"They never said directly that they'd strictly control every step we took," he explained. "They just said: 'It wouldn't be a bad idea if the patriotic alignment of the paper could be reinforced a bit. You know, most newspapers are under the Jewish bankers and, in such conditions, who is going to further the interests of our brother Slavs?'"

Mr Kostyukov, deputy editor of the weekly Obshchaya Gazeta, draws little satisfaction from his paper's refusal to sell out to the bankers.

As with most so-called independent — that is, non-government — media outlets in post-communist Russia, Obschaya Gazeta's journalists have exchanged the censorship of Soviet times for heavy-handed pressure from rich new patrons on whose handouts they depend.

Low cover prices and advertising revenues mean most newspapers are loss-makers. Yet one by one, newspapers have been bought up by Russian financiers. They have done so less to promote particular viewpoints than to be able to trash business rivals and to press the government for favours.

One of the most ambitious of Russia's financier-industrialists, Vladimir Potanin of Uneximbank-MFK, has already left his stamp on two big Russian papers left over from Soviet times — Izvestiya and Komsomolskaya Pravda — in which he has bought stakes. This month he launched another broadsheet daily, the Russky Telegraph.

In its opening broadside, the paper cried out against a "deficit of respectability" in the media. "In the whole of Russia there is not one daily publication which would even vaguely correspond to the Western understanding of a solid newspaper," said a front-page editorial. Yet what was striking about the first edition of Russky Telegraph was its similarity to the clutch of other loss-making, small-circulation broadsheets run by rival tycoons. In a country of 142 million, each broadsheet is read by a narrow group of fewer than 500,000 people living mainly within Moscow's ring road.

Mr Potanin is a long way from catching up with his chief rivals, the presidential security council aide and tycoon Boris Berezovsky, and the media magnate and banker Vladimir Gusinsky.

Although he insists that he has put his shares in a blind trust while he holds state office, Mr Berezovsky is believed to retain effective control over two TV channels and one daily newspaper, Nezavisimaya Gazeta. His current ally Mr Gusinsky — the other "Jewish banker" ominously referred to — runs another national television channel, NTV, a satellite television network and Sevodnya newspaper.

The one thing uniting most Russian media, state and privately owned — the main exception being the communist Sovietskaya Rossiya — is that it shies away from criticism of Boris Yeltsin. The media reflects a growing consensus among the élite in favour of patriotic, oligarchic capitalism, where debate centres on which banker gets what property.

Brave, intelligent investigative reporting can still be found in the Russian press but it comes at the price of heavy political compromise.

South Africa cabinet faces sleaze test

David Beresford in Johannesburg

A ROW between South African cabinet ministers and the country's financial watchdog, the auditor-general, is turning into a crucial test of probity for Nelson Mandela's government.

The clash, which has racial overtones, concerns claims that the minister of housing, Sankie Mthembi-Mahanyele, corruptly awarded housing contracts to family and friends.

The controversy came to a head last week when the auditor-general, Henri Kleuver, presented a report to President Mandela on the so-called Motheo scandal — involving a project in the province of Mpumulanga — and urged a commission of inquiry. The housing minister bit back by accusing Mr Kleuver of bowing to media pressure.

The indications are that key cabinet members are rallying behind the minister, seeing the auditor-general as pursuing a political vendetta against the African National Congress. Mr Mandela promised an early decision on Mr Kleuver's recommendation, but is believed to be inclining towards Mrs Mthembi-Mahanyele.

It is the second time this year that the auditor-general has landed in controversy. In March, the energy minister, Penuell Meduna, suspended the head of the "strategic fuel fund", Kobus van Zyl, alleging corruption. Mr Kleuver cleared Mr Van Zyl in a report to parliament. Mr Meduna accused him of a cover-up on behalf of the apartheid "old guard" in the civil service.

The risk for Mr Mandela is that continuing political attacks on Mr Kleuver are likely to force the resignation of the auditor-general, denting the confidence of foreign investors.

Their confidence is also likely to be shaken by the prospect that Mr Mandela's ex-wife, Winnie, could win the deputy leadership of the ANC at its congress in December — which would place her in line for the presidency.

Meanwhile Mrs Mandela is seeking to postpone her questioning by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the murder of Stompie Seipei and the disappearance of other youths.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY September 2[illegible]

Machine-gun rules in new Wild West

Christopher Reed in Los Angeles

AS POLICE in Los Angeles last week launched an investigation into a bank robbery that left one man dead and another injured, fears were growing that the purchase of 600 M-16 automatic rifles for the city's police department will turn the sprawling megalopolis into a trigger-happy Wild West — with machine-guns.

The robbery, in which guards engaged in a gunfight with five thieves at a bank in busy Van Nuys Boulevard, recalled a bloody shoot-out earlier this year. Then, two robbers wearing body armour held police at bay with AK-47s and sprayed the area with bullets for an hour as live television relayed the mayhem.

The FBI has designated greater Los Angeles the "bank robbery capital of the world", with a fifth of all US bank robberies committed in the area. Last year they reached 1,226, more than three a day. Los Angeles comes by its title because armed robbers in stolen cars can speed away from robberies on the motorways and be 20 miles away in 20 minutes. They can abandon their cars and disappear before police arrive.

California's senator, Dianne Feinstein, last week appealed to Israel not to export tens of thousands of Uzi and Galil machine guns to the United States.

She sent a strongly worded letter to the prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, asking him to intervene. She called on President Bill Clinton to help stem imports of rifles that are theoretically illegal but subvert the law through cosmetic changes to their specifications.

At Van Nuys two bank security guards, both retired police officers in plain clothes and carrying concealed guns, spotted the robbers in their car behind the Great Western Bank. The men pulled on ski-masks and one carried a 9mm semi-automatic pistol. More than a dozen shots were exchanged. The robber with the gun fell to the ground, another was wounded, and a third sprinted through the bank and escaped. The other two sped off in their stolen car.

Several residents recalled the battle of February 28 in North Hollywood, which they saw on television. LA police were outgunned by two bank robbers in black armour who walked boldly about thrusting new magazines into their sputtering rifles. Ten police officers and five passers-by were injured and both robbers were killed. One bled to death with 29 bullet wounds.

The LA force immediately complained they had nothing to match the robbers' AK-47s. Their 9mm Beretta pistols would not even penetrate their armour. One robber was shot through the head with a rifle an officer obtained from a nearby gun shop.

Security experts say aggression often provokes determined robbers into armed response. The two guards worked for a security firm in California that has 17,000 guards nationwide. They are part of US armed corps made up of increasingly militarised police forces, and federal departments that now have 60,000 armed agents.

The Los Angeles police department's M-16 guns were donated by the defence department and are similar to those used by US soldiers in Vietnam. They will be carried in the boot of police sergeants' cars and used by specially trained officers. They are part of $26 million worth of equipment supplied to US police forces in the past two years, including body armour, military helmets, and infrared viewers.

California's Republican governor, Pete Wilson, brandished one of the M-16s at a press conference and declared: "Never, ever again do I want to see officers from the LA police department outgunned."

Fund-raising inquiry blow to Clinton

Martin Kettle in Washington

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton last weekend tried to shrug off the most potentially damaging development so far in the campaign fund-raising row that is plaguing his second term.

Last Saturday the United States attorney-general, Janet Reno, said she had opened a formal inquiry into whether Mr Clinton illegally solicited campaign contributions in telephone calls from the White House during last year's presidential contest. Until now, the investigations into possible fund-raising violations have not involved the president personally. But the inquiry, which may eventually lead to the appointment of a special prosecutor, could change that.

Mr Clinton took a relaxed view of the development when he was questioned by reporters aboard Air Force One while heading back to Washington from California.

"I don't know anything about it," he said with a shrug of the shoulders.

He had been in California taking his daughter, Chelsea, to start her college career at Stanford University. But he took the opportunity while in San Francisco to attend three events which brought in nearly $1 million for his Democratic Party, a reminder of the close and delicate relationship between fund-raising and the presidency.

In its announcement, the justice department said it is "reviewing whether allegations that the president illegally solicited campaign contributions on federal property should warrant a preliminary investigations under the Independent Counsel Act". The review must be completed within 30 days.

This process is similar to ones that have already been started into allegations against the vice-president, Al Gore, and former energy secretary Hazel O'Leary. In each case, if the inquiry finds that the allegations are credible, then it will be extended for a further 90 days to see whether a crime may have been committed. If so, then Ms Reno would be required to ask an appeal court panel to appoint a special prosecutor to examine the charges.

President Clinton's lawyers said that they expect the matter to be dealt with speedily. "No laws were broken and any kind of enforcement action would be absolutely unprecedented."

Mr Clinton came under scrutiny when federal investigators examined records which suggested he solicited funds in calls made from the White House and that some of the contributions went into "hard money" accounts.

BILL CLINTON CHINESE LAUNDRY

WASH AND IRON THE MONEY. RETURN THE PANTS.

'WELL, LOOKIE — IN EVERY PANTS POCKET, A DONATION...'

Mexicans 'own California drug crop'

AS THE annual cannabis harvest begins in northern California, evidence is accumulating that much of the illegal crop is now owned by Mexican drug traffickers — and violence is escalating, *writes Christopher Reed in Los Angeles.*

Some 10 years ago, growing "pot" in the Golden State's "emerald triangle" — the forested counties of Humboldt, Trinity and Mendocino — was an alternative lifestyle for hippies and disillusioned urbanites.

But the law cracked down in quasi-military operations, deploying spotter aircraft and burning the crops. Prices doubled and some growers moved indoors, raising the plants hydroponically.

"It was inevitable that a criminal element would move in under these circumstances," said Dr Mark Kleiman, a drug-market scholar at the University of California's public policy school.

Forecasts he made in the 1980s are proving correct today — with a vengeance. Drug enforcement officers are finding scores of cannabis gardens, many on national forest lands, cultivated by illegal Mexican immigrants. The gardens have sophisticated drip irrigation systems powered by portable generators.

Anti-drug intelligence has found that the labourers are financed by powerful Mexican cartel bosses, who already earn millions of pounds from cocaine, heroin and "speed" (methamphetamine).

Their move to United States soil is an ironic example of the free market at work. They avoid having to bribe Mexican border or state officials and, by using public or commercially owned land, escape the US penalty of having their assets confiscated.

In Mendocino county, Mexicans are estimated to control more than 80 per cent of the illegal crop. The drug traffickers sometimes hire *pistoleros*, and shootings have risen by a quarter in the past five years.

Officers at the Humboldt sheriff's department wear body armour and carry Ruger AC566 machine-guns that fire 750 bullets a minute. They have helicopters and four-wheel drive vehicles. "We are a superior force and we're not afraid of these guys," Lieutenant Steven Cobine said.

Some critics fear this attitude may lead to unnecessary bloodshed, but a drug enforcement official said: "These people are a threat because they have nothing to lose. They are more violent and we will therefore continue to ask for more equipment, including weapons."

Washington hot on the carbon trail

Paul Brown

THE United States is putting pressure on Saudi Arabia to drop claims for compensation for lost oil revenues if the world agrees to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere in an effort to lessen global warming.

Its under-secretary for foreign affairs, Timothy Wirth, visited Saudi Arabia last week at the end of a European tour to try to save December's climate talks in Kyoto, Japan, from failure and President Clinton from a humiliating defeat in Congress.

In an interview in London, Mr Wirth said the White House faced an "aggressive, well-organised" opposition intent on sabotaging the talks and the ability of the US to deliver a deal. His visits to the British, German and Saudi governments, and the European Union in Brussels, are an attempt to finalise a deal on timetables and targets for cutting carbon dioxide emissions.

He said there was no strong backing in the US for action on climate change. There was strong opposition from the Global Climate Coalition, funded by the oil, coal and car lobbies, which was spending millions of dollars on advertisements claiming that electricity bills would rise 20 per cent if the White House pressed ahead with the targets.

A Senate resolution blocked progress in setting targets for CO_2 emissions unless developing countries such as Mexico, South Korea, China, India and Brazil accepted them too. If the White House could not meet this demand there was no chance of getting the two-thirds majority in Congress needed to ratify a global convention agreed in Japan.

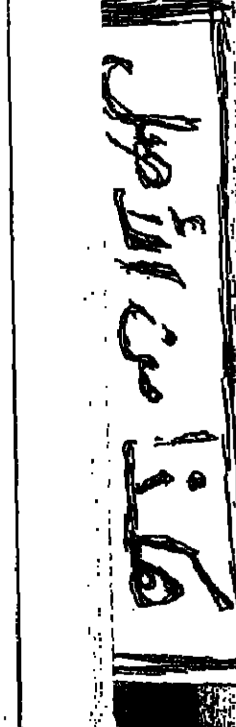
Mr Wirth acknowledged that with 22 per cent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions coming from the US it was difficult to get developing countries to accept targets and timetables when the US has so far done nothing to curb its own profligate use of fossil fuels. For progress to be made, Europe and newly industrialised countries had to accept that Washington would not sign a convention unless high emitters like China were part of the process.

Mr Clinton had promised at the UN Earth Summit review conference in New York in June that he would provide US targets and timetables in time for Kyoto. This would be done after a White House conference on October 6.

Developing countries would be required to make similar commitments: something that the 126 developing countries in the G77 bloc have so far rejected.

The deal will also involve an international system of buying and selling emission limits, under which US companies will build low-emission power stations in developing countries and claim "carbon credits" for the US.

Opponents of the scheme say that this will enable the companies to avoid cutting emissions in the US, but Mr Wirth believes that it will be attractive to developing countries because they will get new technology and [illegible]



The Week in Britain James Lewis

Blunkett acts to defuse truancy 'time bomb'

EDUCATION, education, education was to be the priority of Tony Blair's Labour Government. But it is not simply a classroom problem, as the Education Secretary, David Blunkett, is rapidly finding out. Shortcomings in different parts of the system are calling for a whole raft of "initiatives" and "crackdowns".

The latest crackdown is on truancy, which Mr Blunkett described as a "ticking time bomb" which disengaged thousands of young people from education and undermined their chances of success. His department is to spend £23 million on a drive to combat "social exclusion" and unemployment.

He is inviting bids for projects to help education authorities and schools to tackle truancy and to bring "disaffected" 14- to 16-year-olds back into learning. And there will be £2 million for a programme to give children more opportunities for work-related learning.

The teaching union, NASUWT, to which he outlined his plans, greeted them with some reserve. Its general secretary, Nigel de Gruchy, said teachers knew from bitter experience that there was "no point in trying to force truculent teenagers to stay on at the fag-end of school careers which they themselves see as unsuccessful".

Mr Blunkett is having to send an education "improvement team" into the London borough of Hackney after a damning inspectors' report revealed "disarray and turmoil" in the authority and in the running of its 59 schools. The Government would like to take education out of the council's control, but cannot do so until a new Education Act gives it the necessary powers.

Universities are claiming that they cannot afford the right equipment to teach their students properly. Four out of five universities were found by researchers to be failing their students in this respect, and £400 million is reckoned to be needed.

Ministers later announced they had found an extra £165 million for higher education — a move widely seen as an attempt to draw the sting out of a rebellion at next week's Labour party conference against the imposition of university tuition fees.

TRADE UNION leaders and left-wing Labour MPs reacted with anger to plans by Cabinet ministers either to forgo pay rises of £17,000 (about 20 per cent) or, as suggested by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, to donate the money to charity.

The ministers were put on the spot by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who announced that he would not be taking all of his rise of £43,000 (40 per cent). They also felt they had been bounced into the problem because the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, a bachelor who lives in a subsidised house, said he was following Mr Blair's example.

Mr Blair said he was conscious of the need "to show restraint because of the sensitivities and realities of the public spending situation". (The Treasury had earlier ordered a freeze on the public sector pay bill, which will hit the salaries of doctors, nurses, teachers and thousands of public servants.)

But David Hart, of the National Association of Head Teachers, accused ministers of engaging in public relations politics. He supported their right to take the pay rise and wanted the Government "to acknowledge that head teachers, doctors and nurses are also entitled to salaries which recognise the importance of their work".

ON THE EVE of the Liberal Democrats' annual conference, the party leader, Paddy Ashdown, rallied to the support of his predecessor, Lord Steel, who was reported to have earned nearly £94,000 for his role in the campaign to defend fox-hunting.

Lord Steel had done nothing wrong, said Mr Ashdown. His paid relationship with the pro-countryside lobby, which campaigns to build greater awareness of life in rural areas and supports fox hunting, was an open secret at Westminster and had been listed in the Register of Members' Interests.

The register does not require MPs to disclose how much they earn from their outside interests. However, what caused raised eyebrows was the revelation that for 18 months Lord Steel's remuneration from the Countryside Movement, of which he became chairman in 1995, was significantly greater than his MP's salary of £43,000.

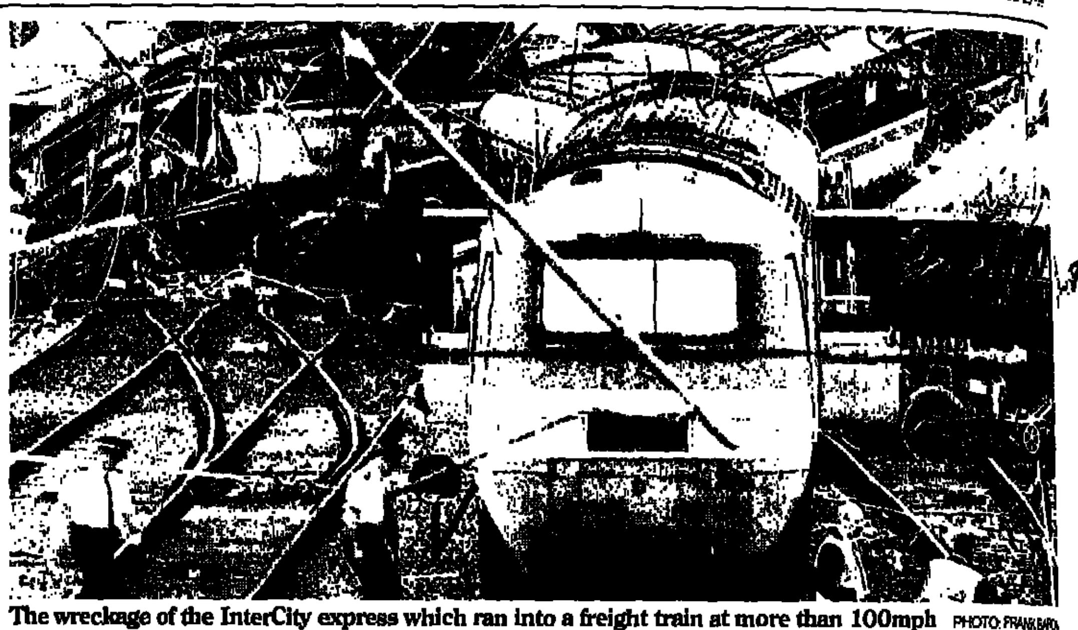
Lord Steel claimed reports of his activities were defamatory and that solicitors would be acting on his behalf.

THE BBC postponed proposals for a radical overhaul of TV and radio news programmes after 48 hours of furious reactions from staff. Leading programme presenters had signed a letter protesting at plans to do away with individual programme editors and to place all news output in the hands of five "super editors" — a change which, it was claimed, would turn the BBC into another CNN.

The U-turn came after intervention by the chairman of the BBC governors, Sir Christopher Bland, who was said to have read the riot act to his director-general, John Birt, and to the chief executive of news, Tony Hall, who dreamed up the money-saving changes.

In the wake of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, the BBC is also thinking again about the way it should cover future big royal events, such as the death of the Queen Mother. This, it is now accepted, should respectfully celebrate her life rather than envelop the nation in a state of mourning (and, in the process, displeasing a substantial minority) as happened following the death of Diana.

BRITISH TAXPAYERS are, for the first time, being asked to calculate their own tax bills this year. The deadline for the return of the baffling self-assessment tax forms is September 30, but only 3.3 million have been received, leaving 5 million outstanding. The Inland Revenue warned defaulters they could face hefty penalties, while denying that it had any plans to profit from the confusion.



The wreckage of the InterCity express which ran into a freight train at more than 100mph PHOTO: FRANK BARON

Crash train safety systems 'were not working'

Guardian Reporters

POLICE have launched three separate inquiries into the cause of a crash involving an InterCity 125 passenger train and a freight train in west London last week, in which six people were killed and 150 injured.

British Transport Police announced that the driver of the passenger train, which was travelling at more than 100mph when the accident took place in the Southall area, was being questioned in connection with a manslaughter inquiry.

The inquiries will focus on why the driver did not stop to let the freight train pass — either through human error in passing a danger signal or because the wrong signal had been given as a result of a systems fault.

According to colleagues of the driver, the train's automatic warning system (AWS) was logged in the train's repair book as faulty when he took charge of the Swansea to London service at Cardiff.

The AWS, which has been fitted in the cabs of all passenger trains for many years, is designed to warn the driver if the train is approaching a danger signal, and to apply the brakes if not disarmed by the driver.

The train was also one of a handful fitted with the Automatic Train Protection system (ATP), a highly sophisticated and expensive computer system designed to override the driver and halt the train automatically in the event of danger. However, it later emerged that the ATP system may not have been activated on the crash train.

The general secretary of the train drivers' union Aslef, Lew Adams, said he was astonished to learn the ATP system may not have been in operation. He said there was an "unwritten assumption" that the operator company, Great Western, would use the fail-safe system on its high-speed InterCity trains as part of a deal agreed with the union more than a year ago in exchange for reducing the number of drivers on such trains from two to one.

Lib Dems unite in scorn for Labour

Michael White

THE Liberal Democrats this week put the Government's economic policies firmly in their sights with a sustained attack on Gordon Brown's "something for nothing" Budget and the broken promises they say it is bound to produce on health and education spending this winter.

Paddy Ashdown's Treasury spokesman, Malcolm Bruce, led the assault as MPs and party activists engaged in familiar tussles over their relationship with Tony Blair's Cabinet when the annual Lib Dem conference opened in Eastbourne on Monday.

Labour's adherence to the spending targets they inherited from Kenneth Clarke's pre-election budgets provided the conference with a theme around which to unite.

This tone was encouraged by a leadership anxious to prevent an obsession with "Lib-Lab coalition" fears, especially in the light of the formation earlier this month of a Lib-Lab Cabinet committee to discuss the "shared constitutional agenda" of the two parties and the declaration by Mr Ashdown that a coalition with Labour was "a possibility" in the future.

Though some speakers were sceptical about the Lib-Dem's own policies, they were united in scorn and disappointment over Labour's economic performance.

Even Mr Brown's decision to "free" the Bank of England was attacked — not because it was wrong, said one speaker, but because it was a "100 per cent right" decision taken in a secretive, undemocratic way. It had long been Lib Dem policy, delegates reminded each other.

In the first major speech of the conference, Mr Bruce, himself an anti-coalition MP from Scotland, taunted his fellow Scot, the Chancellor, with what Lib Dems claim is his misjudgment of the public mood — the demand for better public services instead of rising hospital waiting lists and decaying, crowded schools.

"Tony Blair says it's all the Tory legacy. But now it's Labour responsibility. Liberal Democrats will hold them to account. We will hold an autumn campaign against the cuts," he promised, despite the presence in Eastbourne this week of two ministers, Frank Field at social security and Alastair Darling, a Treasury minister.

He told Mr Darling to take a message home to Mr Brown: "You cannot deliver better schools and hospitals and keep to Tory spending limits. Face the facts. Stop waiting lists going up as you promised to do in the election. Cut class sizes, you promised that too. It's not good enough just to have your hearts in the right place. Put your money in the right place too."

Specifically, Mr Bruce unveiled plans for a Fiscal Responsibility Act which would prevent governments from making "destabilising pre-election income tax bribes" by imposing rules on spending, plus detailed performance criteria for each ministry, which would be monitored by the National Audit Office.

The Lib Dems also want New Zealand-style performance-related pay for ministers and senior officials, with pay cuts for failure. "That would concentrate minds at the Department of Health," Mr Bruce told delegates.

Mr Bruce's junior colleague in the Treasury team, the former Shell economist, Vince Cable, now MP for Twickenham, raised the stakes further by challenging the Prime Minister directly. Rather than countenance further delaying tactics over European monetary union (EMU) he should tell the conference that there would be a timetable for an early referendum on EMU to obtain a democratic mandate for entry . . . we are spoiling for the fight."

The Tories merited little more attention than passing sarcasm. Mr Bruce called William Hague a "charmless Tory Teletubby" who made John Major look a statesman.

● The Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, on Monday launched an outspoken attack on Mr Ashdown, accusing him of going out of his way to criticise Labour.

Mr Mandelson accused the Lib Dem leader of sniping at the Treasury's spending plans in order to pander to members sceptical about closer co-operation between the two parties.

Writing in the Times, he said of Mr Ashdown: "He wears his assaults on the Government as a badge of honour . . . His hope is that such attacks will make his conference less wary of his personal wish to move closer to the Government." He said the tactic was "a dangerous game".

Back me or sack me, says Hague

Michael White

WILLIAM Hague's shakiest week as Tory leader was completed last week by the announcement that the party's chief spin doctor, Francis Halewood, has resigned.

As Mr Hague faced a fresh barrage of flak from his own ranks after accusing Tony Blair of making political capital out of Princess Diana's funeral, he issued a tough back-me-or-sack-me challenge eerily reminiscent of his predecessor, John Major.

"They can reject change and accept inevitable decline. Or they can endorse my leadership, and help me rejuvenate the Conservative party and restore our confidence, pride and electoral success. But without a mandate for change, I do not believe the job of Conservative party leader would be worth having," he wrote in the Daily Telegraph on Monday.

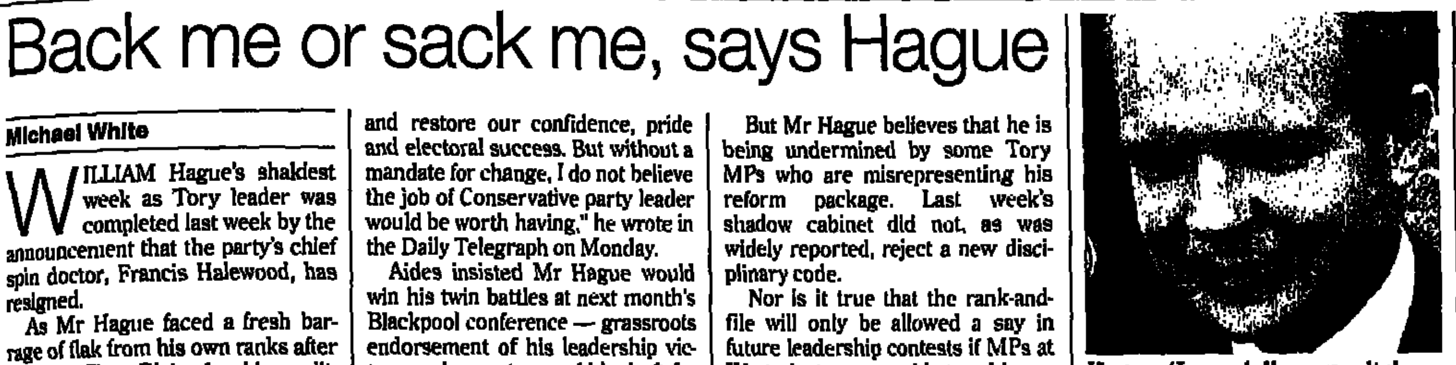
Aides insisted Mr Hague would win his twin battles at next month's Blackpool conference — grassroots endorsement of his leadership victory and acceptance of his draft for restructuring his shattered party.

Tory critics are calling the exercise a "North Korean" or "Albanian" referendum on Mr Hague's elevation, because he is widely seen to have done badly since June, and there is no choice offered to the 250,000 paid-up activists except a yes.

But Mr Hague believes that he is being undermined by some Tory MPs who are misrepresenting his reform package. Last week's shadow cabinet did not, as was widely reported, reject a new disciplinary code.

Nor is it true that the rank-and-file will only be allowed a say in future leadership contests if MPs at Westminster are unable to achieve a clear result. The final formula, likely to give peers, MEPs and local activists about 20 per cent of the new electoral college, will give activists a say under any circumstances, Hague advisers said.

One aide said: "We are not unhappy with what's going on. What we are planning is for the long term: plain-speaking politics, not being bothered by what the press says, and letting people realise that William has stronger qualities than some people give him credit for."



Hague: 'I can deliver results'

The Hague camp admits the grassroots vote may yield fewer than 100,000 returned ballot papers, with some local parties unwilling or unable to participate.

It also admits that a leadership ballot with one candidate only is "Albanian". But an adviser claimed there was justification to tie in a leadership vote with the reform package: "William links the two because he's really saying 'If you say yes to the Albanian leadership but reject the reforms, I don't want the job'."

Mr Hague wrote: "I am not going to turn myself into a stuffy political leader who insists on always wearing a suit because some people don't like the idea of sometimes doing things differently. I also see myself as somebody who can deliver results."

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Labour advises oil firms to sue Greenpeace

David Hencke

GOVERNMENT ministers are advising oil companies to sue Greenpeace for disrupting the exploration of potentially lucrative oil and gas fields in the North Atlantic.

A letter from the energy minister, John Battle, to the former trade minister, Richard Page, discloses that his ministry has been advising oil companies to sue Greenpeace as part of a co-ordinated campaign to deny the pressure group publicity.

The disclosure comes after the oil company BP went to court to try to claim millions of pounds from Greenpeace after it disrupted oil exploration in the area. Greenpeace is seeking a judicial review of the last government's decision to grant exploration licences in the North Atlantic. It argues the Government acted illegally because the exploration breaks the European Union Habitat Directive that protects a rare species of cold water coral, *Lophelia pertusa*, abundant in the North Atlantic.

Mr Battle says: "Early this year it was agreed the Government should respond to any Greenpeace activities in a low-key manner in order to avoid media opportunities for Greenpeace. This strategy was agreed with industry and other government departments . . . companies were advised to exercise the legal powers they had over Greenpeace and the overall situation continues to be monitored by government."

His views were condemned by the shadow trade and industry minister, John Redwood. "While we might have argued forcibly against some of Greenpeace's activities we would not be involved in any campaign to deny them publicity. Given Labour's official support for green issues, this is the worst kind of humbug."

Greenpeace, whose campaign in the North Atlantic is supported by 60 MPs of all parties, is furious. The group is writing to the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to protest about a breach of the party's manifesto commitment to support green issues.

The Department of Trade and Industry pointed out that Mr Battle's comments came after he had been challenged by Richard Page, the Tory MP for southwest Hertfordshire, for being "supine in providing protection to companies legally going about their business . . . It would have been comforting to have seen the Government making forthright statements of condemnation".

Supermarkets fight poverty

Owen Bowcott in Dhaka, Bangladesh

LEADING supermarket chains are to draw up a code of practice aimed at preventing exploitation of the world's poorest countries, the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, disclosed last week.

The fair trading standards, which are already under discussion, will regulate how overseas workers are treated and the impact on the environment of the goods produced.

Speaking in Bangladesh — on her first visit to the developing world since taking office — Ms Short signalled her determination to boost the political profile of her new department and recover from the controversy surrounding her comments about the volcano-stricken island of Montserrat.

"There is massive potential through British shoppers to tackle horrific labour conditions and environmentally degrading practices like excessive pesticides," she said.

The UK's 10 largest supermarket companies annually purchase goods abroad worth more than the economies of about 30 of the world's most deprived states.

"Fair trade has been seen as just about types of coffee, but this will take fair trade on to a much bigger canvas. Ethical and sustainable business is good business," said Ms Short.

The supermarkets have been talking to the Department for International Development (DfID) for some time. Work on drafting the codes would begin "as soon as possible", she said.

The common standards may eventually be incorporated into European Union and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development regulations.

Parliament might soon be encouraged to set an example by providing fair trade coffee to MPs, a department official suggested.

In Brief

THE Mercedes saloon which crashed killing Diana, Princess of Wales, Dodi Fayed and their driver, Henri Paul, may have collided with a Fiat Uno some 60 yards from the fatal crash site in a Paris underpass, according to a source close to the investigation. Trevor Rees-Jones, the bodyguard who survived, has been interviewed by investigators but can so far recall nothing about the accident.

SENIOR police officers called for the laws on rape to be reformed because, they said, only one in 10 rapists is being convicted.

THE police have called for roadside testing for drugs to be introduced within a year after figures were published indicating that 25 per cent of those involved in road deaths had taken either illegal or prescribed drugs.

PETROL prices should double, cars' road tax should be based on engine size and employers should get tax rebates for paying for employees' public transport costs, says a report from the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.

EUROPEAN Union scientists conceded that Northern Ireland farmers might qualify to resume exports of beef without taking further measures to guarantee the health of their herds thanks to computer tracking of BSE-infected cattle. The move suggests that the worldwide ban on British beef exports may soon be lifted.

THE Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, admitted that the Government will not be able to honour its pledge to cut National Health Service waiting lists in the short term.

ASYLUM-SEEKERS detained at Campsfield House near Oxford while their applications are processed claim they are being shut in their rooms like prisoners, given insufficient food and prevented from phoning lawyers or friends following a riot a month ago.

DENNIS MARKS, the general director of the English National Opera, was dismissed by the company's board in the latest colourful act in the world of London opera.

LORD TONYPANDY, who as George Thomas was Speaker of the House of Commons when radio coverage of Parliament began in 1978, becoming famed for his cries of "Order, order", has died at the age of 88.

A RACE on the Rio Negro tributary of the Amazon river between teams of rowers from both Oxford and Cambridge universities and Brazil ended in triumph for the home crew when both British boats sank.

Wales narrowly votes Yes

Ewen MacAskill, Anne Perkins and Michael White

TONY BLAIR'S political honeymoon came to an end last week when his constitutional reform package scraped to victory in the Welsh referendum.

The tiny majority — less than 1 per cent — forced the Prime Minister to acknowledge the "fears expressed by the people" over decentralisation.

After a tense night in which the No campaign appeared to be ascendant, a relieved Welsh Secretary, Ron Davies, declared the result "stunning". But Mr Blair did not travel to Cardiff as he had to Edinburgh the previous week to bask in glory.

The lack of a decisive mandate will mean the bill is given a rough ride. Labour rebels said they would accept the will of the people, but intended to scrutinise the bill line by line.

Mr Blair said: "We must take account of the narrowness of the margin and that is why we carry on, allaying their fears, and making sure they know this is about decentralising power." The vote would not lead to separation, he added.

Legislation will be introduced this year to create the assembly, which will be in place by summer 1999.

In stark contrast with Scotland, where voters backed their parliament 3 to 1, the Welsh had 559,419 voters (50.3 per cent) in favour, with 552,698 (49.7 per cent) against, a majority of 6,721 (0.6 per cent). With a turnout of just over 50 per cent, the assembly plan has the backing of only 25 per cent of the electorate.

The 22 counts betrayed a marked difference in opinion between east and west Wales, with the anglicised Marches voting for the status quo and the gaels of the west and radicals of the valleys voting for change.

The Conservative leader, William Hague, said the vote had divided Wales, and the Government should take that as a warning not to embark on regional English government.

John Prescott admitted that the Government is unlikely to attempt to spread devolution from Scotland and Wales to the English regions before the next election.

He conceded that objections following the narrow win for the Yes camp in Wales meant that ministers might have to rethink their strategy. They would be "listening" to the people and consulting with other parties. Mr Blair "wants consensus and common ground", he said.

The model he wishes to follow is the pan-European system which gives regional government significant economic and political powers in units of around 5 million people.

But, he said, the consultation process would take time.

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History lesson . . . Robin Cook shows would-be diplomats around the Dunbar Court, one of the ornate glories of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, during an open day to encourage an end to the Foreign Office's reputation as a domain of the white Oxbridge male. 'If I'm going to represent Britain I need a Foreign Office that is representative of the whole of modern Britain,' Mr Cook said. Of 6,000 staff, currently only 3.3 per cent are from ethnic minorities PHOTOGRAPH: KIPPA MATTHEWS

Unionists to join talks

John Mullin in Belfast

THE Ulster Unionist party was expected finally to go into the same room as Sinn Fein at Stormont Castle on Tuesday this week, but only to demand Sinn Fein's expulsion from the multi-party talks on Northern Ireland's future.

George Mitchell, the former United States senator chairing the negotiations, is understood to have told UUP leader David Trimble that he will only hear his demands in person — in front of the other participants. He rejected a similar motion from Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, because the DUP was boycotting the talks.

The Ulster Unionists' plea is certain to fail. They will then have to decide whether to withdraw once more or remain in the room and begin all-party negotiations. The indications are that they will stay — not to negotiate, but to confront Sinn Fein, as Mr Trimble put it.

The Ulster Unionists believe Sinn Fein should be excluded on two grounds. First, they suspect the IRA of involvement in the Markethill bombing last week, in which a 400 lb device exploded outside an RUC station. No one was injured. Second, the UUP says the IRA's recent statement that it had "problems" with the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence make Sinn Fein's participation untenable. Sinn Fein signed the principles earlier this month as a prerequisite to participation in the talks.

But Mr Mitchell, in the absence of the Ulster Unionists, has already dealt with the IRA's comments. And security sources say there is no indication of IRA involvement in the republican bombing of the Protestant village. It was, they believe, the work of a hardline splinter group, the Continuity Army Council.

Jeffrey Donaldson, an Ulster Unionist MP, said: "There is no better issue to confront Sinn Fein with than the question of their links to the IRA. It is vital we establish in the talks that the commitment to the Mitchell principles by republicans commits the IRA to these principles, and that any breach will lead to the expulsion of Sinn Fein from these talks."

The DUP, which believes any negotiation is tantamount to conceding an agenda for a united Ireland, is furious at the Ulster Unionists' stance. It has accused them of breaking electoral promises. Their clashes are currently as fearsome as those between Mr Trimble and Sinn Fein.

Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, said the UUP was using its action as way of justifying their move into face-to-face meetings. "If it's a ticket for Mr Trimble to get into the talks, then fair enough," he said.

Britons are lazy cooks

BRITONS, stereotyped as the worst cooks in Europe, are also the laziest, according to a NOP survey published this week, *writes Jamie Wilson.*

Ninety-five per cent of households admit eating reheated convenience food on a regular basis, and 9 per cent say they pretend to guests they cooked the meal from scratch.

Consumption of chilled lasagne, chicken tikka masala and other ready-to-eat meals has nearly doubled in five years to 99,000 tonnes a year, a shopping bill of £505 million. Britain also consumes 45,000 tonnes of frozen pizza and 18,000 litres of prepared soups every year.

In France, with the same population, households spend only £135 million on chilled meals and buy twice as much fresh pasta as the British. Paradoxically, the survey found that the French spend less time in the kitchen preparing their evening meal.

The East Midlands is the biggest purchaser of chilled meals, while the Northeast has the highest proportion of offenders — 16 per cent — trying to pass off ready-cooked meals as their own.

MI5 targets benefit cheats

David Hencke and Richard Norton-Taylor

AGENTS from MI5 are targeting large-scale benefit cheats under an initiative agreed between the Security Service and the social security ministry.

Ministers at the Department of Social Security have approved the appointment of MI5 to oversee an audit of the 5,000 staff running the benefit fraud operation.

The ministry wants to save £2 billion over three years to contain the annual £80 billion benefit bill.

The disclosure of MI5's involvement comes in a confidential memorandum which has been circulated to top officials in the ministry.

A Department of Social Security spokeswoman said last Sunday: "Where organised crime is connected with benefit fraud — such as printing false giros [cheques] — MI5 is contacted. But I must stress that when individual claimants only are involved it is not a matter for MI5."

But Jeremy Corbyn, Labour MP for Islington North, said: "This is desperation in the post-cold war era to find something for MI5 to do. MI5 would be better concentrating on pursuing large-scale tax evasion by the wealthy in offshore tax havens."

Steve Webb, the Liberal Democrats' spokesman on social security and MP for Northavon, said: "This does seem rather extraordinary. I'd rather see the ministry spending more time helping those who are entitled to benefit being able to claim."

MI5 has persuaded ministers that social security fraud is a legitimate area for the agency, which already has privileged access to personal information held by government departments through its responsibility for monitoring computer security across Whitehall. It argues that social security and housing benefit fraud come under MI5's new role to combat "serious crime", defined extremely broadly in the 1996 Security Service Act.

The Conservative government indicated last year that MI5's expanded role would be limited to helping the police combat mafia-type gangs and drug barons.

● The Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, called on MI5 to destroy all files on "subversives" created during the cold war after receiving an apology from Stephen Lander, the head of MI5, over the leaking of details of his own file by a former agent, David Shayler.

Poland turns the clock back

THE surprise victory of the Solidarity movement in the Polish elections has its roots in previous defeat. Four years ago, one-third of the electorate was effectively disenfranchised because it voted for small warring parties which failed to gain a single seat. This time more than 30 diverse groups, banded together in the Solidarity Election Action (AWS), appear to have re-enfranchised the same proportion of the voters. Though the governing Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) has done better than last time, it is not enough. On the face of it, Poland is entering a period of stable politics with clearly identifiable government and opposition: yet the real picture is likely to prove rather less neat — and perhaps less stable too.

True, there is a sense of the familiar democratic revolving door. Some voters have simply vented their discontent with current economic difficulties on the party in power, reversing the decision taken four years ago. Opinion polls suggest that in doing so they believe, somewhat inconsistently, that a change of government will not make much difference anyhow. But past history has also been a complicating factor here as elsewhere in eastern Europe. Foreign investors may have regarded the (ex-communist) SLD as being more likely to maintain stability than the (ex-populist) Solidarity alliance, but many other Polish electors have voted as much for past memory as current reality. The issue of collaboration with the secret police has been exploited too.

The AWS, led by Marian Krzaklewski, must now link up with the pro-reform Freedom Union (UW) if it is to form an effective coalition. Though both parties have their origins in the same place, that only illustrates the disparate nature of the former movement. The AWS may indeed find it easier to cohabit with the former communist president, Aleksander Kwasniewski, than with the former Solidarists of the UW. These endorse the new constitution that the AWS has threatened to overthrow because it does not attach sufficient weight to the role of the Roman Catholic Church. The AWS's trade union constituency will also be wary of the UW's commitment to the faster privatisation of state-owned industry. The UW itself will look just as warily — and rightly so — at Mr Krzaklewski's fervent commitment to "pro-family" issues, including opposition to last year's reversal by parliament of the post-communist ban on abortion.

Statements from both parties on Monday did not promise an easy harmonisation of interests. The bizarre alternative of an AWS coalition with the ultra-right Movement for Reconstruction of Poland plus the old orthodox left Peasants' Party was even being floated. This, in turn, might leave the UW and the SLD as potential partners for reform. The Polish electorate may soon be wondering what they have voted for unless the party leaders, across the spectrum, can quickly reassure them.

Wales says Yes – but . . .

ON THE night it was Wales that produced the best political theatre. All the pre-vote build-up had concentrated on Scotland, with the proposed Cardiff assembly a bit of an also-ran. In the event, though, the Scottish result lacked all suspense, while voters from Conwy to Caerphilly pulled off a great British political cliffhanger. Handfuls of votes separated the two sides, with the Noes ahead from the first to the penultimate result. The very last district settled it, when the Welsh heartland of Carmarthenshire suddenly turned the entire night on its head — and delivered the slimmest of victories for devolution.

A winning margin of 0.6 per cent, and a turnout that just scraped 50 per cent, means that Wales has whispered Yes — with a loud hint of Maybe. The Government has achieved a technical, rather than a moral, mandate for its policy of Welsh self-rule. The knife-edge ambivalence of the Wales decision will have a direct bearing not only on the new assembly, but on the larger dream of spreading power throughout Britain.

Tony Blair seemed to recognise this fact. He accepted that he now has to reassure those who were scared by the prospect of Wales going its own way. He agreed that the Government must now, through its actions, prove that decentralisation does not mean break-up. The three in four Welsh voters who either said No or didn't bother turning up have to be persuaded that what's coming is not a slide toward nationalism.

The first move will come later this year with the creation of the all-party commission promised in the white paper. Labour will gather with its allies from the Yes for Wales effort — Liberal Democrats, Greens and nationalists — to draw up the rules and "wider culture" of the assembly. Chastened by the narrowness of their victory, they should design a body free of the faults of which the No campaigners warned. They have to make sure it's not just a talking shop and that its costs will be met from savings made by cutting quangos. The scale of the victory in Scotland means that the Edinburgh bill will go through Parliament virtually on the nod. But the near-defeat in Wales will guarantee extra-vigilance, with anti-devolution MPs confident enough to subject the Welsh legislation to line-by-line scrutiny. This is a healthy development; it will make the Cardiff assembly a better place.

The larger question concerns the spread-out of power in England. A BBC/NOP poll last week found more than 80 per cent of Londoners ready to vote for an assembly and a mayor for the capital. Tyneside is already mobilising its own campaign for greater self-rule. They would probably follow Scotland — while the Midlands may share the divided sentiments of Wales. The simple fact is that not every part of Britain has the same desires and needs. One size does not fit all. And that, after all, is why Britain needs decentralisation in the first place.

Redefining the bounds of decency

THE DOGS were muzzled, the guns silenced. Warring British editors finally sat down together last week to discuss the ways in which the press can convince a sceptical public that this time they really mean it. Little was decided, but the Code Committee of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) did at least issue a constructive statement acknowledging that things had to change. Lord Wakeham, the commission's chairman, is drawing up some tough new guidelines which he was due to announce later this week.

It is to be hoped that Lord Wakeham realises that he has it in his power to do something historic. There is a gradual acceptance among most sentient journalists that the culture of intrusion pioneered by Rupert Murdoch 30 or so years ago has spread too far and too fast. Whatever the eventual conclusion about the last minutes of Princess Diana's life there is now a guilty acknowledgement that the media had collectively edged beyond reasonable bounds. Celebrity stalking had turned into a lucrative game with virtual victims who were expected to feel no pain.

That culture surely ended with Princess Diana's death. The recent spate of declarations that paparazzi pictures will henceforth be shunned were a welcome public manifestation of the genuine soul-searching currently going on within newsrooms. But the public mood will not be satisfied if leading players in the media feel they can stop at that. There needs to be an explicit acceptance that privacy is a fundamental human right that will be respected by the media, in balance with other rights. And then there needs to be a swift statement of the ways in which the PCC will turn that acceptance into a tougher, well-policed, Code of Practice.

That is Lord Wakeham's task, and he should be as ambitious as possible. He will never again have such a moment to clean up the press's act. No tabloid proprietor or editor is currently going to find much public support for a heroic defence of snooping, bugging or paying people to kiss and tell. He should simply state what limits he thinks reasonable in a civilised, liberal democracy.

Mr Murdoch will not like any of this, but he must learn to live with it. William Shawcross's not unfriendly biography of the News International chairman makes a telling point: "The constant salacious invasions of privacy that his papers have practised, and which have helped to finance [his] empire, are not easy to reconcile with the walls of privacy that he and Anna [his wife] erected around themselves and their family." Mr Murdoch deserves his privacy. So do the rest of us.

Britain's Tories flirting with self-destruction

John Gray

AN OMINOUS pattern is emerging around William Hague. It does not have a great deal to do with his performance as Tory leader. Recently the Conservative party chairman, Cecil Parkinson, has been at pains to distance himself from Hague's ill-advised criticisms of the prime minister following the funeral of Diana. Parkinson's stance is in tune with a widespread Tory mood of discontent with Hague. But the whisperings that already surround Hague's leadership are more than responses to his evident inexperience. They show a party hopelessly divided about its future in a headlong decline that it does not know how to stop.

The Conservatives are rudderless not because they have chosen a weak leader, but because the social base of their party has disintegrated and they lack any coherent political project. They cannot resolve the conflicts between Thatcherites and One Nation Tories that led them into the abyss on election day.

This intractably split party confronts a Government that is bent on an historic realignment at the centre of British politics. It aims to overcome the divisions among progressive parties and politicians that allowed the Tories to rule for most of this century. If it succeeds it will give Britain's liberal majority a political dominance it has not had since before the first world war.

Hague seems fated to relive the humiliations that dogged John Major throughout his career as prime minister; but whereas Major's leadership was at times dignified by a touch of tragedy, his successor's already has an air of farce. The Tory leader lacks an instinctive feel for the society that 18 years of Conservative government has engendered. When Hague appeared at the Notting Hill festival sporting a coconut drink, he had the carefree but bemused look of a tourist stranded in an unfamiliar land.

Hague is at one with most of his party in his directionless bafflement. Conservatives today find themselves lost in a country that is foreign to them. They are casualties of a social revolution that they themselves engineered but whose nature and consequences they have yet to understand. The country that Hague imagines himself equipped to govern has changed beyond recognition from that which Margaret Thatcher inherited in 1979. Only Tories appear to find this surprising.

Thatcher was possessed by a vision of a country whose institutions had been ruthlessly reshaped but whose character remained miraculously unaltered. Markets were injected into hospitals and universities, council tenants were chivvied into buying their homes, public services were scorned as feckless repositories of unthinking compassion, and job insecurity was intensified for a host of occupations and professions. No corner of British life was left undisturbed.

Despite all the social dislocations that these policies produced, the Conservatives imagined Britain would still somehow be the place mocked in the post-war Ealing films, a nation of stoical conformists bicycling impassively around changeless village greens.

This picture may have had a faint semblance of reality in the Britain of the 1950s and 1960s that had been moulded into something approaching one nation by the reforming Labour government of 1945. By the time Major left office, it was little more than a confection of the Tory media. In combination with vast changes in the world economy, Conservative policies had undone the social and family structures that underpinned pre-Thatcher Britain.

The unravelling of the inherited class culture by new aspirations and inequalities, the enfranchisement of women at work, majority acceptance of a diversity of cultures and lifestyles . . . these changes have yet to run their course, but they have already made the older Britain that is captured in Tory mythology irretrievable.

The Conservative party has changed as much as any other British institution. It has been declining since the 1950s, but its decay has been spectacular since the Thatcherite glory days of the 1980s. The Conservatives have felt the full force of the break-up of deference and collapse of trust in institutions that are the hallmark of post-Thatcherite Britain.

That is not to say that the Tory party has accepted the country its policies have helped to create. At present it is largely an embodiment of resistance to it. The Conservative party has become the redoubt of those, such as the hunting and shooting fraternities, who feel alienated from the liberal mainstream. But even those who reject today's Britain cannot escape from it.

THE TORIES are not the deferential tribe of pre-Thatcher times. Today the Conservative party is a fractious and volatile organisation in which the leader is always on trial.

Another change of leader will not stem Conservative decline. The Tories' troubles do not stem from Hague. They come from the society the Tories helped to create. By imposing a harsh modernisation on Britain's economy, Thatcher made socialism a marginal ideology. At the same time she destroyed the social structures that made conservatism a feasible political project.

The Government appears determined to seize the opportunity for realignment at the centre of British politics that the Tory rout has opened up. Blair's unprecedented initiative in bringing the Liberal Democrats on to a cabinet committee is not a response to any electoral necessity. It can be understood only as a move in a larger strategy the aim of which is the reinvention of liberal Britain.

There are still some who see the landslide of May 1 as an electoral swing which the pendulum movement of post-war politics can be relied upon to reverse. They have failed to grasp the scale of the Conservative collapse and the ambitions of Blair's Government. We may be witnessing the beginnings of an era of co-operation among the parties and politicians that express the values of liberal Britain. If it continues the Tories will be seen off for good.

John Gray is professor of politics at Oxford university

Le Monde

Zapatista rebel leader sticks to his guns

Bertrand de la Grange
in Mexico City

FAITHFUL to the strategy he has implemented since organising the Indian uprising in the southeastern Mexican state of Chiapas in January 1994, the Zapatista guerrilla leader, Subcomandante Marcos, has pulled another surprise.

He has announced that he does not intend either to lay down his arms or to join the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN), a new political organisation set up by his supporters in Mexico City on September 16.

Marcos was responding to optimistic statements by government members, who had welcomed the formation of the FZLN. "We have made a mistake," he said in a message from Chiapas to activists who had converged on Mexico City to adopt the FZLN's programme and statutes.

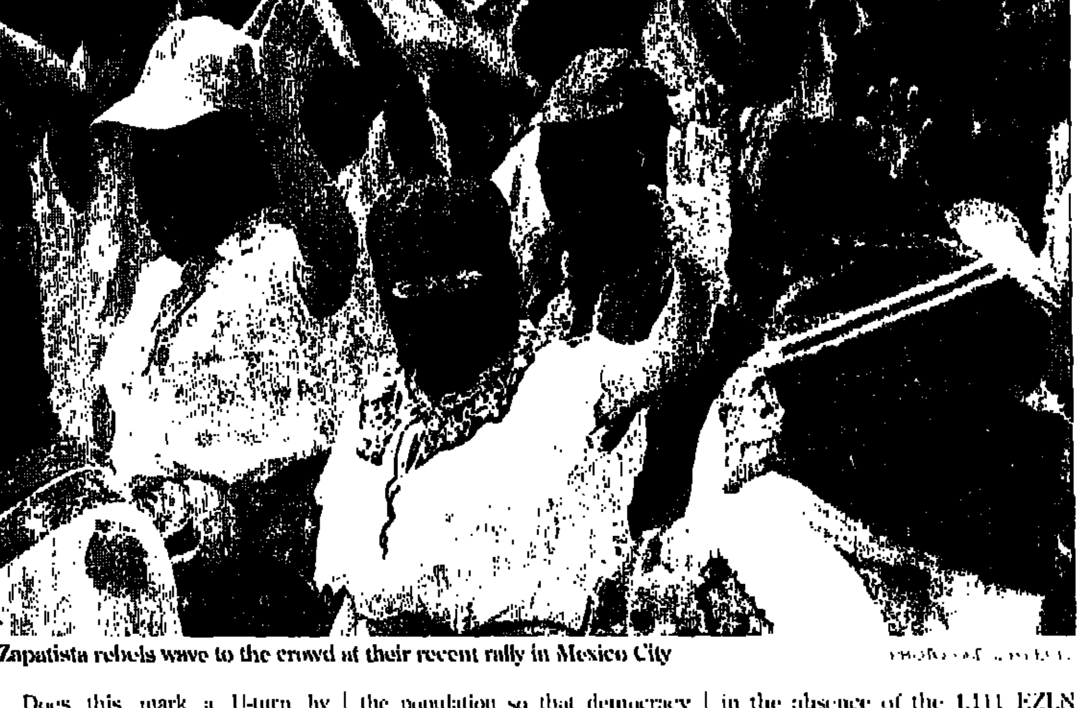
"When we called for the FZLN to be set up we thought that peace was round the corner and that our rebellion ought to seek other forms of struggle. [But] the government has refused to answer our just demands, thus preventing us from turning ourselves into a political, civilian and peaceful organisation in order to continue the struggle."

Marcos said that the war was continuing in the south and that the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) would not lay down its arms until its demands had been met.

The rebel leader, a former philosophy student who gained considerable support in leftwing Mexican and international circles when he defended the Indian community and attacked neo-liberalism, did, however, say that the FZLN should go ahead, "to strike fear into the powerful".

Javier Elorriaga, a former political cadre in the guerrilla movement and now the leading light of the new organisation, stressed that the FZLN would be "autonomous" and should not be regarded as the "EZLN's political wing".

"We shall be two brothers, but we shall be different," Marcos said.



Zapatista rebels wave to the crowd at their recent rally in Mexico City

Does this mark a U-turn by Marcos, who in the past has used his sometimes bellicose, sometimes poetic communiqués with consummate skill to fight a government that has incomparably greater firepower but does not know how to deal with his dialectics?

Marcos says it does not, pointing out that he has always said that the guerrilla movement would not disarm until the government had learnt, under pressure from "civilian society", to "command while obeying" — the Zapatista rebels' now celebrated slogan.

It was Marcos who, in January 1996, first mooted the idea of setting up the FZLN, and who, in a text published last month, defined its structures, dogma and aims (which are a carbon copy of the EZLN's).

The FZLN, like the EZLN, intends to keep its distance from political parties, with which it refuses to collaborate. It says it is not interested in taking power, but instead prefers to concentrate on mobilising the most underprivileged sections of the population so that democracy can be exercised "from the bottom" and the government forced to "obey" civilian society.

How exactly it intends to do so is not made clear, but Marcos's decision to maintain an active guerrilla movement in southern Mexico may be regarded as a way of putting pressure on the government.

Marcos's latest change of direction has thrown the Mexican far left into greater confusion. It had already been seriously jolted by constant infighting and the recent electoral successes of the legal left, which won the local and mayoral contests in Mexico City and increased its representation in parliament at the expense of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has been in power since 1929.

According to the organisers of the FZLN's founding conference, barely 400 people participated in its 14 "idea workshops". The workshops took place in a chaotic atmosphere and were conducted largely in the absence of the 1,111 EZLN "observers" who had travelled from Chiapas to break out of their "political and military encirclement".

Whatever the future of the FZLN, events of the past few days have once again spotlighted the conflict in Chiapas and the appalling plight of Mexico's 9 million Indians.

The Zapatistas have been able to use the local press as a mouthpiece to denounce the "militarisation" of various regions and to demand that the government come up with a constitutional reform package that takes account of the accords it signed with the EZLN in February 1996.

A difference of interpretation over the concept of Indian autonomy, which led to talks being broken off in August 1996, caused the present deadlock. However, recent statements by President Ernesto Zedillo and the interior minister, Emilio Chuayffet, pledging to show "flexibility in order to resume the dialogue", suggest talks could start again soon.

(September 18)

Prodi keeps Italy on the road to reform

Michel Bôle-Richard in Rome

THE bonsai olive tree in the office of the Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi, survived undamaged when the room was accidentally destroyed by fire on September 11.

Olive Tree is the name of his centre-left coalition, which has ruled Italy since May 1996. "This must mean the coalition is doing fine," said Prodi, who has been purring with satisfaction since the end of the summer break.

Not for the first time, Fausto Bertinotti, leader of Rifondazione Communista, an orthodox Marxist party and a coalition member, has been causing trouble over welfare reform. But Prodi takes it all philosophically. There is no question of changing the composition of the coalition — if that were to happen, he would stand down.

What Prodi seems to be implying is that if Bertinotti wants to spark a crisis over the welfare reform, which is vital for Italy if it is to become a rock-solid member of Europe's economic and monetary union, then so be it.

This will be the real test of the new parliamentary session. It will determine the fate of public finances and the future of old-age pensioners. Everyone agrees that the system needs reform, but no one is agreed on how it should be done.

The government has been working with the trade unions, but there is no easy solution. The latest bright idea is a social credit card that would enable its holder to draw state benefits. Bertinotti refuses to allow certain vested benefits to be shaved.

Prodi, however, remains confident: "In the past few years the government has never been as stable as it is now." He hopes to be able to continue his policies until the spring of 1998, when the first participants in a single European currency will be selected, and thus reap the benefit of the massive drive to stabilise the economy that has been accomplished in the past year.

The achievements of Prodi's centre-left government have been welcomed in many quarters, from the International Monetary Fund to the Italian employers' federation, Confindustria.

They accept that the medicine, although unpalatable, has produced results and that there are definite signs of a recovery, albeit a timid one. GDP during the second quarter of this year increased by 1.5 per cent over the first quarter. Growth could rise to 1.2 per cent this year, and is expected to increase to at least 2 per cent in 1998.

Prodi is lapping up praise from those who were scathingly critical of him less than a year ago. Inflation continues to fall, and the lira has been thriving since its re-admission into the European exchange-rate mechanism (ERM) last November.

Despite Bertinotti's antics, the government is basking in a mood of optimism. Yet the press has been full of speculation that a coalition crisis is in the offing. How real is the risk? Gianfranco Fini, president of the neo-fascist National Alliance, says: "Bertinotti's skirmishing within the coalition is a sham. I'm increasingly convinced there won't be any governmental crisis."

The rightwing opposition, on the other hand, has run into a squall. Pierferdinando Casini, leader of the Christian Democrats' Centre, has questioned Silvio Berlusconi's leadership of the centre-right grouping known as the Freedom Alliance. Fini had to make considerable diplomatic efforts to get the two men to agree to an uneasy truce.

These stirrings of dissidence come at a time when a deputy in Berlusconi's Forza Italia party, Cesare Previti, who was defence minister when the media mogul was prime minister and is a close friend, faces jail for corruption at the request of the "Clean Hands" team of magistrates in Milan. Parliament will decide next week whether to agree to their request.

(September 16)

A rethink on the nuclear energy route

EDITORIAL

THE French nuclear industry has suffered two setbacks. The environment minister, Dominique Voynet, has accused the state-owned nuclear energy utility, Cogema, of having made a "mistake" when de-sealing the pipes of its plant at La Hague. Meanwhile the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, announced that he had asked the state-owned Electricité de France (EDF) to abandon its plans to build a nuclear power station at Le Carnet, in the Loire estuary.

These two moves indicate the government's determination to change the rules for the nuclear industry. From now on, there will be no question of it being allowed to function in a secret and unsupervised way.

Voynet, the leader of the Greens, made this clear when she took up her ministerial job in June. She reiterated the government's aim, which she said was "to separate the functions of the supervisor from the supervised in a high-risk area".

Cogema's management did not seem to get the message: on June 16 they sent divers to confiscate submarine equipment being used by Greenpeace, which wanted to show that the La Hague plant was not being operated as it should.

Now there will be no question of EDF hatching plans for new power stations, which regularly run into fierce opposition — not only from environmentalists but also from an increasing number of local people.

Coming as it does after the decision to close down the Superphénix fast-breeder reactor at Creys-Malville, in southeastern France, the scrapping of the Le Carnet project shows that the government is phasing out the previous nuclear-only energy policy.

In deciding to protect natural wetlands in the Loire estuary, Jospin has responded to a widespread feeling that technological progress should no longer take priority over natural heritage.

France is already well equipped with nuclear reactors. Its nuclear power-station construction programme, started just after the first oil shock of 1973, will be completed this year. More than 80 per cent of electricity supplied by EDF is generated by nuclear reactors, a level unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

The government now has to allow for the replacement of the current power stations, which will not take place until 2010. That was one of the aims of building a reactor at Le Carnet.

What it must urgently do if it is to meet France's future needs is to decide what proportion of its energy should be produced by thermal power stations, and also perhaps to encourage the development of renewable energy technologies.

(September 18)

Weary of the school of hard knocks

Opposition to 'ragging' at French colleges is growing, writes **Vincent Hubé**

FRANCE'S junior education minister, Ségolène Royal, is on the war-path: she wants to put an end to the barbaric practice known as *bizutage* or "ragging" — an initiation ritual which looks more like bullying and is often imposed on first-year students at several *grandes écoles* (prestigious university-level colleges).

"Freshers" are allowed only five hours' sleep at night and 10 minutes for lunch. They are constantly taunted by second-year students, forced to do endless press-ups, and prevented from leaving the campus or making telephone calls without the permission of their seniors.

"The worst thing was the physical and mental fatigue," says Jérôme, who was put through the mill at a branch of the engineering college Ensam in the small Burgundian town of Cluny. The Cluny college, housed in a former Cistercian monastery and almost exclusively attended by boarders, has a reputation for being particularly tough. "What was also hard to put up with was the lack of privacy. And you became obsessed with what you were going through."

His only escape was the sick bay. His room provided no sanctuary, as the college administration had kindly supplied second-year students with keys to newcomers' lodgings.

Those who approve of bizutage argue that it creates a bond of solidarity among students. Jérôme calls it "brainwashing". The historian Charles Day, in his book on engineering schools, Les Ecoles D'Arts Et Métiers (Belin, 1991), quotes from The Book Of Traditions, a kind of sacred handbook for engineering students. It says that the purpose of bizutage is to "take a rough-hewn object, make it suffer, rub off the corners and make it interchangeable with others".

The Book Of Traditions also quotes a president of the powerful Society of Former Students as saying: "The aim of the 'traditions' is to create a homogenisation of behaviour from the start and to restrict character deviation."

Jérôme and a friend protested against these breaches of individual freedom, and their parents wrote repeatedly to the Ensam administration. This resulted in the two students being insulted, threatened and, in the end, "excluded" from their year.

That meant they could no longer use the library or the photocopying machine and were barred from all college associations. The whole process was supervised by the students' bureau, which had organised the bizutage in the first place. After six months of such treatment, Jérôme decided to transfer to another Ensam college elsewhere.



In December 1995, a report on Ensam by the CNE, an independent teaching assessment body, denounced the college's "barbaric" characteristics and its "degrading and alienating practices". The so-called "traditions", it went on, were "harmful to students' work". It said that students who refused to accept bizutage became "pariahs in their own college".

Two years after the publication of the report, which angered former students, the head of Ensam, Guy Gautherin, announced that there were to be major changes in the way first-year students were treated. "Getting newcomers to integrate does not necessitate this kind of treatment," he said.

Gautherin was an Ensam student himself before taking up a teaching career. He was shocked, on his return to Ensam, by the bad atmosphere in its colleges. In November 1995, he ordered the Châlons-sur-Marne and Cluny branches of Ensam to be closed for a week because students had not respected the date on which bizutage was supposed to end.

His aim for the new academic year, which starts on September 22, is to eradicate all persecutory, compulsory or unpleasant practices such as the waking up of students, continual demand for press-ups and constant abuse. "I shall use the legislative measures announced by Ségolène Royal to make sure the reforms are accepted by the older students," Gautherin said.

It is not certain that he will win the battle. The 26,000-strong Society of Former Students still stoutly defends what it calls Ensam's "values". The prestige of the Society, whose members include company bosses and leading engineers, means it is still held in awe by many students, who suffer bizutage one year and impose it on others the next.

In 1995, Aude Wacziarg published a book describing her experiences as a student at the highly regarded Jesuit college, the Lycée Sainte-Geneviève in Versailles. Wacziarg, a cheerful person, was proud to get into one of the best schools that prepare pupils for a university-level maths course. But she spent her first weeks there crawling along rocky streams, eating dog food and getting her hair plastered with eggs, flour, ketchup and cod-liver oil.

More insidious even than this repeated humiliation was the psychological indoctrination. "Bizutage is no different from massive brainwashing," she now says. At the time, she hid the truth from her mother, who was alarmed when her daughter came to spend her first weekend home to see that she had lost 5kg.

It was out of the question for Wacziarg to admit to being weak; and she was determined not to exclude herself from the group. It was only after several weeks that she dared admit to herself that she could take no more and that she had suffered inhumane treatment.

When her book came out, the management of the Lycée Sainte-Geneviève denounced it as a pack of lies; but that same year they officially banned bizutage at the school. Other establishments have also outlawed the practice — the Polytechnique some 30 years ago, and the Ecole Vétérinaire at Maisons-Alfort in the early nineties.

MANY colleges decided to ban this modern form of noviciate because they feared the repercussions of adverse publicity. Others will have to watch their step now that Royal is stepping up anti-bizutage legislation.

Her bill on the prevention of sexual delinquency, which is due to become law in October, penalises any pupil or student who, "through constraint or pressure of any kind, imposes on another pupil or student acts, postures or conduct that are contrary to human dignity, in the course of events or meetings in a school or educational environment". Offenders are liable to a six-month jail sentence and a fine of 50,000 francs ($800).

This week Royal is sending instructions to heads of colleges to ensure that their internal regulations, which are often very strict, are properly observed. If infringements occur, she is prepared to send senior schools inspectors to the establishments involved and to penalise — administratively and through the courts — all guilty students and colleges suspected of complicity.

Royal presented her proposed measures at a round-table conference organised by the National Committee against Bizutage. The committee was set up only last summer by a philosophy teacher, Alexandre Andujar, who managed to obtain the co-operation of often warring bodies — the three main teachers' unions, the two parent-teacher associations, the Human Rights League and the Magistrates' Union.

The committee applauded Royal's measures. As Andujar pointed out: "It is a good idea to remind people that it is forbidden to break the law, even on the pretext of respecting tradition."

But will the law be respected? In many colleges, "integration weekends" have already replaced bizutage. The danger is that such events take place outside college premises and therefore escape administrative control. It looks as though the forbidden practices may persist, but in secret.

Not all forms of bizutage have the "historic" roots of practices at Ensam or the Lycée Sainte-Geneviève. Hitherto unknown behaviour has been observed within the past 10 years in medical faculties. That was something Dr Christiane Lobryeau-Desnus discovered only two years ago when her daughter, a first year student at the Créteil medical faculty, became a victim.

Neither the girl's mother nor her father, who had both studied at Créteil, had experienced any bizutage there. But their daughter was prevented from going to the toilet or using the canteen or car park, and forced to wear a pink shower-cap round her neck and watch pornographic films when she should have been attending lectures.

The situation in medical faculties varies from city to city. In Reims, it is second-year students who are bullied by colleagues in their third or fourth year. "They are my fondest memories as a student — it was a fortnight-long rave-up," says Hervé, a student who has both suffered and administered bizutage.

The "rave-up" consisted of spending the night tied to scaffolding, being plastered to a chair or being forced to take off his clothes. "Those who didn't want to stay around could go out. We didn't force anyone," he says. He admits he would not do the same today. He has matured and is now more interested in passing his exams than in victimising younger students.

(September 12)

Russia's Death Row prisoners seek early end

Jean-Baptiste Naudet
In Moscow

PRISON conditions in Russia have been described by Amnesty International more than once as akin to "torture". The situation has now become so bad that some prisoners on Death Row say they have had enough and are suffering a fate worse than death.

They want to be executed as soon as possible, in the best Soviet tradition, by being shot without warning in the back of the head.

Yuri Skuratov, the Russia's chief public prosecutor, revealed on September 11 that several people under sentence of death had written to him asking to get it over with. The paradox is that the law is on the side of such prisoners, but they are falling victim to the "good intentions" of the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe.

In February 1996, Russia was accepted as a member of the Council and signed conventions forbidding it to carry out executions. But Russia violated its pledges by continuing secretly to shoot prisoners who had been sentenced to death.

The Council protested. In February, Moscow finally called a permanent halt to executions. But it did not change its legislation. The government simply relied on Boris Yeltsin's presidential prerogative of pardon.

The trouble is that, according to the chief public prosecutor, 35 per cent of those sentenced to death refuse to apply for a pardon. Some of them have even written to the authorities demanding to be executed. As Skuratov points out, "there are no legal grounds for not executing them".

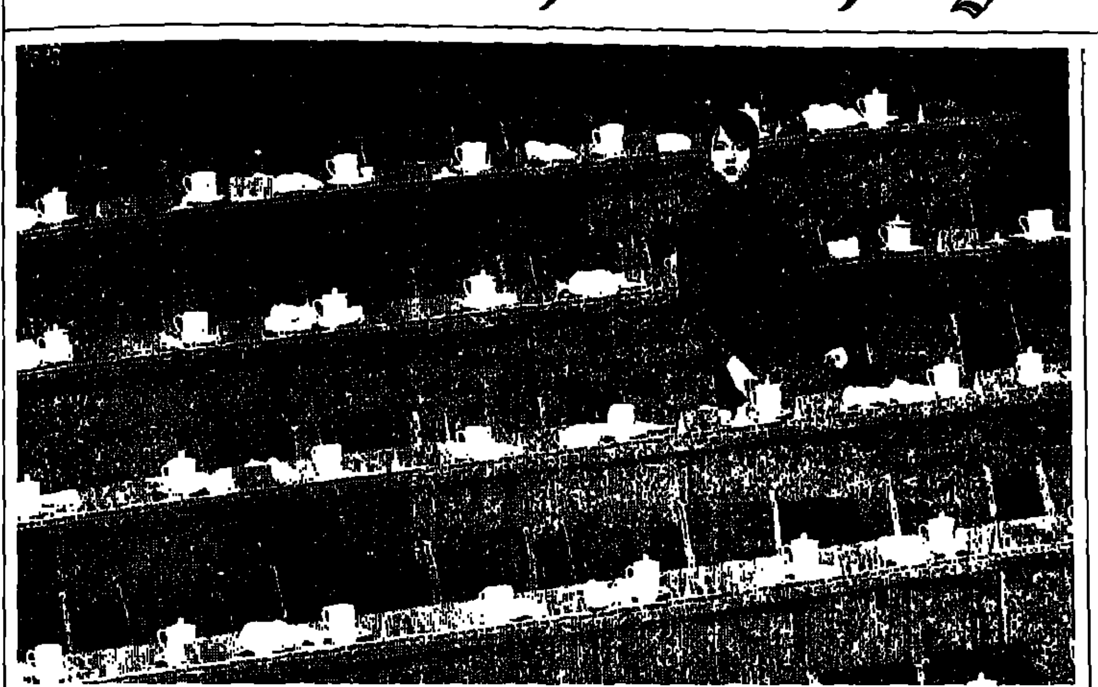
The issue is an embarrassment to Moscow in more than one sense. It once again spotlights the inhumane conditions in Russian prisons, which are rampant with disease and so overcrowded that detainees sometimes have to take turns to sleep, and where, as in the days of the gulag, ordinary prisoners are tyrannised by hardened criminals with the blessing of the prison authorities.

It also casts a new light on Moscow's outburst of indignation at the public executions that took place in Chechenia last week. Despite having refused to pardon dozens of Russian prisoners on Death Row last year — when the moratorium was in place — Yeltsin described the executions in Chechenia as "barbaric and illegal". The Chechen supreme court has since suspended its controversial executions.

On September 11, Russia said it intended to urge the Council of Europe, which Yeltsin is due to address in Strasbourg in October, to "examine the matter" — the matter being, of course, the executions in Chechenia.

(September 14-15)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani



The Great Hall of the People empty at the end of the Communist Party congress last week PHOTO: MIKE FIALA

China's Party Makes Changes at the Top

Steven Mufson in Beijing

CHINA'S COMMUNIST Party added a corruption fighter and a former foreign trade minister to its supreme seven-man Standing Committee last week and named seven new members to the powerful 22-person Politburo.

The new appointments rounded out a technocratic leadership, much of it trained in the Soviet Bloc during the 1950s, that appears likely to focus on managing economic modernization while taking a cautious approach to political reform.

"This is a leadership that believes in modernization rather than democratization," said a leading Western academic in Beijing.

Another academic, David Shambaugh, political science professor and director of the Sigur Center for Asian Studies at George Washington University, described the new lineup as "centrist, cautious, conservative, and colorless."

In the new leadership, economic policy-maker Zhu Rongji has risen to the third-ranked slot, up from fifth, widely seen as a sign that he will become China's next premier in March. Only President and Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng rate higher.

The new Politburo members include two senior military officers, provincial party secretaries from Jiangxi and Henan, the party leader of Beijing, a central party bureaucrat who already holds powerful behind-the-scenes positions, and a former geologist who serves on two "leading groups," or inter-departmental policy committees: one dealing with financial and economic reforms and the other with science and technology.

The new appointments came one day after the forced retirement of four Politburo members, including Qiao Shi, head of the National People's Congress and leading patron of liberal reformers, and Gen. Liu Huaqing, the country's most senior military leader. Qiao and Liu were also members of the more important Standing Committee.

With Gen. Liu gone, there was no military representative left on the new Standing Committee. Until last week, Liu, 80, provided a voice for the military at the highest level of government. Now the armed forces will have to rely on two Politburo seats and on President Jiang Zemin, who also serves as chairman of the Central Military Commission.

Many analysts said the absence of a military officer on the Standing Committee meant a standoff over whether to put Gen. Zhang Wannian or Defense Minister Chi Haotian in the most inner circle. In the end, both were simply placed on the Politburo.

The two new faces on the Standing Committee are Wei Jianxing, 66, and Li Lanqing, 65. Wei heads the party's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the watchdog group charged with rooting out corruption in the party. Wei was installed as acting party secretary in Beijing after a multimillion-dollar embezzlement scandal involving the previous party secretary. He is credited with helping to resolve that case. During the Cultural Revolution, he was stripped of his posts and was forced to work in a factory.

Wei has been widely considered an ally of the relatively liberal Qiao, and some analysts saw his selection to the Standing Committee's number six slot as a gesture to Qiao and to his followers in the party.

During the Cultural Revolution, Li was sent to the countryside for three years. In the 1980s, he served in the Tianjin mayor's office before moving to Beijing to join the Foreign Trade Ministry. Since last year, he has been working on education reforms.

Spate of Air Crashes Worries Military

Bradley Graham

EXTENDING a recent rash of military aviation disasters, an Air Force B-1 bomber on a training mission in Montana crashed last week, killing all four crew members on board, the Air Force announced.

It was the sixth military air crash in seven days. After the fifth mishap, Defense Secretary William S. Cohen ordered all military services to take a 24-hour break in training flights to review safety procedures.

Air Force spokesmen had few details about what happened to the B-1, which belonged to the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota. The plane was reported to have been on a training mission in a military operating area before it went down in the southeastern corner of Montana, near the state line with Wyoming. The B-1 was carrying no weapons at the time of the crash, the Air Force said in a statement.

It was the 11th of the long-range bombers to be lost since the plane entered service in 1985, leaving 94 in the fleet, according to Air Force officials. Initially designed to carry nuclear weapons, the B-1 no longer has a nuclear capability and has never flown in combat.

The recent spate of aviation accidents has confounded defense officials, who say they can discern no common pattern that might explain the sudden surge. Each incident has involved a different type of aircraft and different apparent causes.

On September 13, an Air Force C-141 transport jet with nine aboard collided with a German military jet off the coast of southern Africa as a result of what U.S. sources say was an error by a foreign air traffic controller. The following day, an F-117 fighter jet making low passes during an air show north of Baltimore suddenly lost pieces of its left wing and fell to the ground, erupting in flames.

A Navy F/A-18 fighter jet then dropped into the Persian Gulf, and a Marine Corps plane plunged into the swamps of North Carolina. Earlier, two F-16 fighter jets from a National Guard unit collided off the New Jersey coast during a training mission.

This year the U.S. military has suffered fewer aircraft losses from accidents, 54, than in any recent year. It lost 67 last year, 69 in 1995 and 86 in 1994, according to Pentagon statistics.

U.S. Pulls Out of Ban on Land Mines

Dana Priest and Charles Trueheart

PRESIDENT CLINTON announced last week that the United States will not join an international treaty banning antipersonnel land mines, resisting worldwide pressure on the grounds that the ban could put U.S. troops at risk in time of war, which he called "a line I simply could not cross."

The U.S. withdrawal from negotiations, which came the same day that 89 countries meeting in Oslo, Norway, endorsed the treaty language, was greeted with jubilation and relief by humanitarian groups and countries that support the ban. Many negotiators believed Washington was trying to dilute the treaty with a last-minute counterproposal and a flurry of telephone calls between the White House and foreign heads of states.

"We are not prepared to pay any price" for Washington's approval, said Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, who spearheaded the process.

The treaty prohibits countries from using all antipersonnel land mines, small explosive devices that have created a humanitarian crisis because they maim and kill 25,000 civilians each year, many in countries no longer at war. Signatories will have up to four years to destroy their stockpiles of land mines, and up to 10 years to clear areas that have been mined.

The Pentagon praised Clinton's decision and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms, R-South Carolina, called it "a courageous act." Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vermont., the foremost U.S. advocate of a ban, pledged to push ahead with legislation to ban land mines that has already won bipartisan support.

At a news conference with his top national security advisers, Clinton said he believed the United States had gone "the extra miles and beyond" to seek a compromise on the treaty. But some administration officials acknowledged the United States had gotten into the negotiations too late to shape a treaty that could be accepted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The administration was put on the defensive from the moment its negotiators arrived in Oslo last month and were seen as a superpower trying to manipulate a 13-months-long, grassroots campaign that had grown into a worldwide humanitarian crusade.

"I'm pleased the United States had the grace to withdraw. . . I'm proud of the governments who stood up to the onslaught of the remaining superpower, coming in and pushing and shoving to get its way," said Jody Williams, head of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. "We hope President Clinton will take his confused internal policy home and fix it."

However, many proponents of the treaty have argued that U.S. participation is essential to its success. Without U.S. leadership, they believe it will be more difficult to persuade the world's largest users and manufacturers of land mines, including China and Russia, to join the treaty. Neither country participated in the Oslo negotiations.

Clinton announced a series of unilateral initiatives, including a request to Congress to add $12 million to U.S. efforts to help other countries demining their lands.

However, the measures would not, as Clinton said, "eliminate all anti-personnel land mines from America's arsenal."

Clinton's top arms control adviser, Robert Bell, told reporters that the United States had no intention of finding alternatives to the millions of antipersonnel land mines it uses to prevent enemy troops from breaching anti-tank minefields. The vast majority of the antipersonnel land mines the United States now uses are for that purpose.

Pentagon officials who reviewed an advance copy of Clinton's text tried unsuccessfully to get the White House to remove the inaccuracy. Later in the day, Defense Secretary William S. Cohen issued a statement saying, in part, that U.S. troops "will continue to deploy" antipersonnel mines used to protect anti-tank mines.

Some of Clinton's other measures fell short of the U.S. counterproposal at Oslo. He said he had directed the Pentagon to find alternatives to other self-destructing mines, or "smart mines," by 2003. In its counterproposal, made earlier, the Clinton administration would have agreed to give up the use of those mines.

Clinton also directed the Defense Department to find alternatives by the year 2006 for antipersonnel mines the United States stockpiles for use in Korea, the same amount of time offered in the counterproposal. He pledged to redouble U.S. efforts to win a global antipersonnel land mine ban in the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which this year failed to begin talks requested by the U.S. on land mines.

The ban approved in Oslo is supported by many U.S. allies, including Britain, Germany and Mexico, but is opposed by many states that produce and use mines, including China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, South Korea, Kuwait, Japan and Israel also oppose it.

Humanitarian organizations that lobbied for the unprecedented disarmament treaty, the first to limit a conventional weapon, were jubilant at the outcome of the grueling negotiating process, initially dismissed as quixotic and unrealistic. Support for the treaty gathered momentum from the well-publicized sponsorship of Diana, Princess of Wales, before her death the day before the conference opened.

"Humanity still has the power to move nations," declared Louise Doswald-Beck of the International Committee of the Red Cross, one of the leaders of the land mine-ban campaign.

Antitank mines, set off by the weight of a large vehicle or by the magnetic force of large metal objects are permitted under the ban, as are many kinds of anti-tampering devices used to stop enemy troops from removing them.

Clearing up the mess, page 20

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 28 1997

Ducking the Drugs Debate

COMMENT
Richard Cohen

IN THE Helms-Weld heavyweight fight, almost everyone won. Jesse Helms won because he got his way. William Weld, the former Massachusetts governor, won because he got national exposure for his likely presidential run, and President Clinton won because he split the GOP and managed, once again, to take a nonposition position — this time in favor of both Weld and Helms.

So who lost?

We did.

We the people of the United States lost and not only because Helms, a man with a brick for a brain, was able to cow the entire Senate. We lost because the issues that so vexed Helms and caused him to deny Weld a hearing — the medicinal use of marijuana and needle exchange programs for intravenous drug users — were not even debated. Weld favors them both and this, we are told, is why Helms hates him so.

But Weld is right and Helms is wrong. Helms' compassion and concern for human life, so evident in his furious opposition to abortion, nevertheless excludes drug addicts for some reason. Maybe he thinks they deserve to die.

True, they are junkies — lawbreakers and all of that — but the fact remains that they risk their lives every time they use a shared needle. With the drug, they may also be getting HIV. Their deaths, both cruel and protracted, are more often than not going to come at the expense of the public. Their lives could be saved with needle exchange programs. Study after study shows this to be the case — everything from one by New York's Beth Israel Hospital to an overall review by a panel of the National Institutes of Health.

The opposition to needle exchange programs is not so much scientific as it is moralistic. To some people, it seems just wrong to aid addicts in their addictions. You can understand such a sentiment. But there is no evidence that needle exchange programs abet drug usage, yet there is plenty of evidence that addicts will use whatever is available to satisfy their craving. In this case, a perfectly understandable moral argument is rebutted by some hard facts.

The argument in favor of the medicinal use of marijuana is not quite as strong — but nonetheless persuasive. Some studies indicate that marijuana has a medical benefit for cancer patients and glaucoma sufferers, reducing pain and the ill-effects of chemotherapy. Others suggest that anything that can be done by marijuana can be done just as well by other — legal — drugs.

The fact remains, though, that people who have used pot for medicinal purposes swear by it. Richard Brookhiser, a senior contributing editor at the — Jesse take note — very conservative National Review, used marijuana to relieve the nausea of chemotherapy for testicular cancer.

It would be one thing if the drug under discussion was both rare and extremely addictive. But marijuana is as common as red ties in Washington. Some 70 million Americans have, as they say, experimented. As for its addictive qualities, they are largely exaggerated. Some people, predisposed in some way, apparently do get hooked. The same case, though, can be made against alcohol — and, in spades, about cigarettes.

In both cases — needle exchange and the medicinal use of marijuana — Helms is not only dead wrong, but cruel. He personifies the unwillingness of the political establishment to distinguish between drugs that are very bad and drugs that are not so bad, and its insistence on treating our national drug crisis mostly as a criminal-justice matter and not as a public health issue. It's silly to the point of cruelty to make a criminal out of a desperate cancer patient.

Weld gave Clinton an opportunity to make those points. But the president apparently once shared a needle with a political coward and so he has said nothing on the subject. His drug policy has gone from nonexistent in his first term to mindless in the second.

As for Weld, he conducts himself like a pedigreed cat — haughty, independent and sufficient unto himself. He lost his ambassadorship and, probably, the patience of the White House, but he did not lose as much as the rest of us did — the chance to discuss a drug policy that is both inhumane and illogical.

There Are No Safety Nets As the Young Fly the Nest

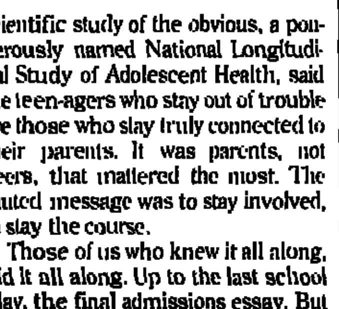
OPINION
Ellen Goodman

"I LIKE TO think of it as the empty drawer syndrome," says my friend, reaching for the right, light, touch.

She and her husband have just delivered their youngest to college and returned to a home that seems as neat as a stage set for a life they are no longer leading. Suddenly, storage space.

They have been transformed by time into a household the census bureau describes as a married couple with adult children. But is that still a family? What kind?

I tell her about the television ad in which a husband and wife dance around the kitchen, phone unhooked, deliriously happy to be making stir-fry dinner for two, now that the kids are gone. But for every moment of emancipation my friend feels, there is another moment or three when life seems abruptly downsized.



Last week, the Clintons followed her well-worn route from home to dorm.

It was their turn for this rite of passage. Their turn to move from full-time to part-time parenting. This mother and father will now go from hands on to hands on and off.

Chelsea Clinton, the freshman, seems by any stretch of the imagination, ready. The awkward 12-year-old who came to fame with a spotlight gleaming off her braces has become a gracious 17-year-old praised for, of all the abnormal things, her normalcy.

Her parents, criticized for every public move they make, are praised for this job well done. Privacy protected, a child unspoiled, a life as balanced as the ritual breakfasts they ate together, the time protected from prying or politics.

Now, right on schedule, these proud partners in her upbringing are expected to be accomplices in her leave-taking. Indeed the experts, lined up in fine formation to comment on the First Family, all warn about "letting go." They talk about the loosening of strings, apron and otherwise, of parental ties that might bind. Too tightly. Suddenly, too tightly.

How odd this rite is. Recently, a scientific study of the obvious, a ponderously named National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, said the teen-agers who stay out of trouble are those who stay truly connected to their parents. It was parents, not peers, that mattered the most. The muted message was to stay involved, to stay the course.

Those of us who knew it all along, did it all along. Up to the last school play, the final admissions essay. But then the 12-year-old is a 17-year-old, the teen-ager in her room becomes the student in her dorm. And now we are told to let go.

The president-father facing a separation as wide as the country said: "Planes run out there and phones work out there. E-mail works there, so we'll be all right." And they will.

But this is not some one-day transfer of power. It's a long and ambiguous phase of family life. A time when the young adult wants to be on her own, until the inner child calls home. A time when parents are expected to be on call, but cannot put their lives on hold.

My friend laughs about the possibility of opening a detox center for parents going through withdrawal. What do you do with the part of you that still listens for the car in the driveway? What happens to the expertise acquired, not easily or quickly, in the subject of your own child? What about the fierce responsibility that began the moment an infant's cry pierced your sleep? And then, of course, there is love.

This rite of passage is part of the great American balancing act between independence and connection. Between the culture and the psyche. Between the expectation that we raise our children to lead their own lives wherever that takes them — and the unavoidable hope that it won't take them truly away.

It is a tricky act to perform and there is no net that promises safety.

As a veteran of this rite, I tell my friend lightly that Thanksgiving comes sooner than you think, that sleep comes easier than it did. There is indeed e-mail, the phone does work out there.

And at the end of the long process, if it goes well, parents and children are adults connected by choice as well as history. It's only the drawer that's empty.



Riot police evict leftwing Israelis from a rooftop in East Jerusalem last week after Jewish families moved into a building in the Arab part of the town
PHOTOGRAPH: RICK BOWMER

Many U.S. Jews Fall Out With Netanyahu

Caryle Murphy

SECRETARY of State Madeleine K. Albright had an enthusiastic source of domestic support when she struck a tough balance in Israel this month, demanding that Palestinians crack down on terrorism and that Israelis halt "provocative" unilateral acts that jeopardize peace talks.

Albright's boosters are prominent, mainstream American Jewish leaders who have begun publicly to signal their frustration with the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — which they consider partly responsible for the breakdown in the peace process — by urging the Clinton administration to adopt a more activist role in dealing with both sides.

These Jewish leaders, who include major contributors to the Democratic Party, have concluded that a more muscular U.S. role, even if it involves pressure on Israel, is necessary to revive negotiations over implementing the 1993 Oslo Accords, several of them said in recent interviews.

They said they have asked the administration, in private meetings and public letters, to use its influence with Israel to discourage one-sided actions that damage the climate for peace, such as settlement expansion in the West Bank and construction of Jewish homes in East Jerusalem. They have also urged Washington to make clear to Israel that the United States has other national interests in the Middle East, such as the flow of oil and the stability of friendly Arab governments, which are all being adversely affected by lack of progress on the Oslo peace process.

Several of these leaders said that they were pleased by Albright's blunt approach during her first trip to the region as secretary of state, in which she said she aimed to provide the Israelis and the Palestinians a "reality check."

"Albright did what I hoped she would do, which is that she would emphasize not only [PLO leader Yasser] Arafat's obligation to give 100 percent effort on the security issue but to emphasize as well that there isn't going to be a peace process with unilateral actions by Netanyahu," said Theodore R. Mann, a former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"I think she struck a good balance," said Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which represents the nation's 1.5 million Reform Jews. "It was absolutely essential . . . to make clear there would be no bending on" the issue of terrorism. "The rest of her statements . . . were also appropriate because . . . she was pointing out to the government of Israel that . . . it can't be solely and exclusively a discussion of terrorism."

J. J. Goldberg, author of Jewish Power, a book about U.S. Jews, said, "What we're seeing is a much greater willingness by mainstream Jews and Jewish groups to distance themselves from Israeli policy." These groups "are becoming more willing to encourage American pressure because there's a widespread anger at the Likud . . . over the perception that it's undermining the peace process."

In light of Israel's deteriorating relations with the Palestinians, nearly 100 prominent Jews went public early last month in an advertisement in The New York Times that warmly embraced a speech by Albright last month promising a more active U.S. mediating role.

The ad was signed by prominent individuals and endorsed by the two largest U.S. Jewish religious organizations, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. Other signatories included not only representatives of leftist Jewish peace groups but also former leaders of mainstream organizations.

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CIA Proffers More Cloak, Less Dagger

As it marks its 50th anniversary, the agency is being steered away from covert action, writes **Walter Pincus**

CIA-run agents who infiltrated terrorist groups in recent years aided in intelligence gathering which helped prevent two attacks against U.S. embassies in the past seven months, the new CIA Director, George J. Tenet, told Congress earlier this year.

Tenet declined to provide details of the operations. But in making even that minimal disclosure, he was signaling that while covert action remains a primary activity at the CIA in the post-Cold War period, there has been a departure from the spy service's often-criticized history of clandestine operations directed at influencing foreign government policies or attempting to remove political leaders, according to agency officials.

Reflecting the new threats that face U.S. policy-makers, major covert actions are now being aimed at disrupting terrorist plans, stopping narcotics shipments or fouling up financial transactions of missile makers, sources said.

For instance, computer hacker technology has been used to disrupt international money transfers and other financial activities of Arab businessmen who support suspected terrorists. Military research and development operations of hostile governments, such as North Korea, Iraq and Iran, have been sabotaged by having suppliers sell them faulty parts that will eventually fail.

Other tools permit "spiking" exports and imports to and from rogue countries such as Libya and Iraq with extraneous matter to create dissatisfaction with consumers.

"In the past five to seven years, the sophistication of the new tools of covert action have helped bring about a sea change in operations from the old days," according to a senior intelligence official. He added: "These operations are easier to do and provide incremental successes. A shipment is stopped, another is sabotaged, we take down a terrorist cell; things like this are happening now every week."

As the CIA marks the 50th anniversary of its founding this month, the new approach indicates an important shift in emphasis away from the type of covert actions for which the agency became famous and infamous.

The agency's operations against the president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, were sharply criticised by Iraqi exiles and former agency operatives disappointed in how things turned out. In addition, new CIA and Justice Department investigations into past agency operations in Central America are expected to be released shortly, guaranteeing more criticism for the agency's cooperation with drug dealers.

Agents recruited for intelligence gathering rather than paramilitary operations are "more disciplined," the official said, "They relentlessly gather intelligence on which we can act, giving us the option of using some new tools."

Representative Porter J. Goss (R-Florida), the first chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to have served as a CIA case officer, said, "There has been an evolution in the tools and equipment," pointing out that in the 1960s, CIA covert action included trying clandestinely to affect elections and to influence foreign political leaders, labor leaders and university students without showing U.S. involvement.

There still are traditional, smaller-scale covert operations underway against Iran and Iraq that include placing propaganda in local newspapers or a country's television network, leafleting, beaming in radio broadcasts from secret mobile transmitters and supporting exiles.

Some are underway because members of Congress want something done against such anti-American countries. One CIA official noted that House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia) has made well-publicized demands that efforts be made to take stronger steps to undermine the Iranian government.

Such pressures worry intelligence veterans. "Little, dumb covert actions to get Congress off your back are bound to fail," said a former top-ranking CIA officer with experience in Afghanistan and Europe. "Covert action is not a miracle worker," he added. He was particularly critical of exiles from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq who worked the halls of Congress trying to gain support for their groups and their efforts to regain power.

For most of the agency's history, covert actions were directed against the Soviet Union or communists. In the late 1950s, CIA officials promoted the agency's role in overturning the Guatemalan and Iranian governments and fostered the impression that it could get rid of whatever leaders or government it wished.

The subsequent inability through years of covert actions to topple Cuba's president, Fidel Castro, or Libya's leader, Muammar Gadafy, did not prevent the agency from being described as the source of coups and guerrilla activities worldwide.

Controversy over CIA covert operations in Central America in the 1980s still rages. Within the next month, a CIA inspector-general report is due on allegations that the agency trained a Honduran military unit that committed human rights violations. And later this year, the CIA and Justice Department's inspectors general are to deliver their reports on allegations that agency operatives supporting the Nicaraguan contra rebels at the same time aided Central American drug dealers who brought narcotics into the United States.

At his Senate confirmation hearing in May, Tenet reflected the view of many active and retired officers when he called covert action to change another government's policies "a critical instrument of U.S. foreign policy", but only one instrument among many.

"It should never stand alone, it should never be the last resort of a failed policy," he said.

ILLUSTRATION: STEVE McCRACKEN

Risking His Neck in the New Russia

Anthony Olcott

SIBERIAN LIGHT
By Robin White
Delacorte. 441pp. $23.95.

SOME of the best new mysteries are the detektivs being banged out by Russians, who are scribbling furiously to turn quick baksy on their countrymen's insatiable appetite for pulp fiction. Flailing about in the moral fog of present-day Russia, the new Russian mysteries are raw, intense and — so far at least — completely untranslated.

Which is why Robin White's Siberian Light is heartily recommended to any mystery fan curious about the Russian detektivs but disinclined to invest the time necessary to master Russian. Set in the oilfields of far Siberia, White's novel manages to encompass all the paradoxes of Russian life today, making his book uncannily similar to the genuine detektivs.

Gregori Nowek, a petrologist fired for trying to prevent a pipeline spill, has gotten himself elected mayor, largely on the strength of his campaign slogan, "Be Honest, Can I Do Any Worse?" Nowek's village is sunk in poverty and decay, its only source of income the AmerRus oil exploration joint venture, which, alarmingly, isn't pumping much oil.

Some people, though, are getting rich: Kaznin, once the regional KGB head, now in "private security"; Yufa, head of the local mafiya; and Ryzkhov, a "fixer." Except that persons unknown have now slit Ryzkhov's throat, also killing two of Nowek's cops who stepped in at the wrong moment. His town has no funds to pay their salaries, so Nowek feels he should at least see where the cops died. When it becomes clear that someone wants desperately to hush these murders up, Nowek decides to find out for himself what really happened.

When some stray pebbles from the lugs of the killer's boot point the ex-geologist mayor in the direction of the Americans, Nowek knows that the price of truth could well be his own neck. In the best traditions of both the American hard-boiled detective story and the new Russian detektiv, Nowek gets stabbed, beaten and nearly drowned but still plods ahead because, as he later confesses to his new love, Anna, "Honesty has always been one of my main flaws."

Nowek's determination not to be lied to, not to be pushed aside, and not to let loved ones be trampled into the mud by others rushing for the trough would be almost a cliche if this novel were set in America. White has done such a convincing job of setting this simple heroism in Russia, however, that Siberian Light gives an excellent approximation of what it is like to watch the crime writers of Russia today struggling to build a new morality amid the wreckage of their shattered history.

Dangerous Liaisons

Howard Frank Mosher

HERE ON EARTH
By Alice Hoffman
Putnam. 293 pp. $23.95.

MARCH MURRAY is an intelligent, attractive, thoroughly decent woman. More, she's a caring wife and mother, with a successful career as a silversmith and a comfortable home in California, "where the light is so lemon-colored and clear it is almost possible to forget there are other places in the world." So why under the sun, when she returns to her New England hometown for the funeral of the Murray family housekeeper, would March jeopardize everything in her life for a man whose only recommendations are a brutally controlling sensuality and a psychopathic determination to dominate his world and everyone in it?

This is the central dramatic question of Alice Hoffman's dark and wonderful new novel, Here On Earth. At the heart of March's dilemma is what to do when someone you loved long ago disappears. "Where do you go — into pieces, into atoms, into the arms of another man? You go shopping, you cook dinner, you work odd hours, you make love to someone else on June nights. But you're not really there, you're someplace else where there is blue sky and a road you don't recognize. If you squint your eyes, you think you see him, in the shadows, beyond the trees. You always imagine that you see him, but he's never there."

The unfinished business, in this case, is Hollis, a Heathcliffian outcast whom March's well-meaning father took into the family off the streets of Boston as a boy. Trouble is, Hollis has grown up into a man "with no education and no training and no heart at all." For Hollis, against all her better judgment, March seems willing to give up her loving husband of nearly 20 years, her self-respect, even her physical safety. And it soon becomes apparent that he will stop at absolutely nothing to possess her, body and soul, including threatening her teenage daughter, Gwen, and all but imprisoning March in his remote country estate. "Mr. Death," Hollis was called in Florida, where he amassed a fortune by killing losing racehorses with his bare hands for the insurance. The rumor around town is that he may very well also have killed his wife.

Alice Hoffman has never seen deeper inside her characters than in Here On Earth. With clear-eyed sympathy, she sees inside March, who still perceives Hollis not as the ruthless manipulator he's become, but as the orphan boy she once loved, "who kissed her in the attic and promised to love her forever." She sees March's hermit brother Alan, known simply as "the Coward," incapacitated by gin and sorrow. She sees Alan's neglected teenaged son, Hank, a bright and promising young man who has "never been able to figure a single reason for his existence." She sees how Hollis, who carries with himself wherever he goes the "scorching scent" of anger, is in fact driven to his villainous actions by sheer loneliness. Yet Hoffman is no fatalist or doomsday crier. Far from it. She knows that here on earth, love can sometimes emerge from hatred, hope from despair, particularly for the young.

Walking Wounded

Gerald Nicosia

SHOPPING CART SOLDIERS
By John Mulligan
Curbstone. 239pp. $22.95.

IF I HAD to pick three novels that best embody the American experience of the Vietnam War, they would be Tim O'Brien's Going After Cacciato, Larry Heinemann's Paco's Story, and John Mulligan's just-published Shopping Cart Soldiers. A thread of sublime absurdity runs through all three — a kind of W.C. Fields meets "The Twilight Zone" free-for-all of adolescent emotion, supernatural possibility, and slapstick, flat-on-your-rear failure. It is, perhaps, the only workable approach to a war that began with John F. Kennedy's shining optimism and ended with a bunch of once venerable, now nearly forgotten voices croaking that they shouldn't have gotten involved in the first place.

Of the three novels, Shopping Cart Warriors is the hardest to read — not because of Mulligan's style, which in some ways is even more elegant, and not because of its flaws, which are considerable. The difficulty is that the magic of his tale, at times completely captivating, is at other times lost in writing thickly crowded with the author's own pain.

This is not, in the traditional sense, a book about the Vietnam War. This book is the Vietnam War or, more specifically, a seismographic record of that war raging its way through one man's consciousness. Shopping Cart Soldiers is a novel of questions — many explicit, some implicit — but the preeminent one is this: What causes such profound and permanent changes in a human being when he goes to war?

Mulligan has an intimate, first-hand knowledge of his subject. Born in 1950 in Kirkintilloch, Scotland, he emigrated with his family to the United States when he was just shy of his 18th birthday. Within a few months of his arrival, he enlisted in the Air Force and was promptly shipped to Vietnam. His overseas experience was a crazy mix of stoned parties, helicopter joy rides and terrifying rocket and mortar assaults, where he saw men, including his best friend, blown to bits. Remaining in the service for six years, he married and had a daughter, then quit and went to work as a machinist and construction worker.

By 1975, as he puts it, his "PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] had begun to kick in." He drank heavily and used drugs to numb his feelings, turned for help to the Veterans Administration, which rejected him as "an alcoholic and a drug addict" (since post-traumatic stress disorder was not yet a recognized diagnosis), and eventually walked out on his family. During most of the 1980s, Mulligan lived on the streets in San Francisco with hundreds of fellow homeless veterans, pushing a shopping cart as he continued down toward self-destruction. It was only through the intervention of a Vet Center counselor in 1989, and then through his participation in a Vietnam veterans' writing and meditation group led by author Maxine Hong Kingston in 1991, that Mulligan was able to return to a stable, productive life.

The main character of Shopping Cart Soldiers, Finn MacDonald, is clearly Mulligan's alter ego. A heavily traumatized, Glasgow-born Vietnam vet who has been boozing and wandering the streets for a dozen years, Finn has a severe alcoholic seizure in a North Beach park, bangs his head on the concrete, and lands in San Francisco General Hospital. During the three days he remains in a coma there, he experiences an extraordinary series of visions, which provide the hallucinatory framework of the novel. The way Mulligan stretches that framework into something very like a modern morality play — and the way he makes Finn's nightmares and horrors our own — are measures of his exceedingly disturbing artistry.

Finn, just 20 years old, is having a routine tour of duty in Vietnam when one day he and four friends make an unauthorized flight in a helicopter gunship. They are on a "mission of mercy" to look for some companions who crashed in a cargo plane. At the crash site, they find the crew and all 26 passengers, soldiers who had been on their way home, lying burned in the wreckage — all except one, an older guy called "Ivy League," who had been a hero to all of them. Ivy League has been tied to a tree. His face is mutilated. There is a bullet hole in his forehead.

The men start to examine the rest of the bodies, not realizing they have been booby-trapped. A couple of mines explode, killing one man immediately, and the others suddenly find themselves in the midst of a Viet Cong ambush. In a few hours, Finn MacDonald is utterly changed: He "becomes a cold, insensitive killer that night; life means nothing henceforward and the realization that death really is his business becomes clearer than any textbook, story, or drill instructor might ever hope to tell . . . Nonchalance and apathy become an integral part of him that night, more perhaps than even the blood running through his veins."

WE MOVE quickly from realism to myth and allegory. On a spiritual plane, we learn, Finn has become an "Empty," living somewhere between the "Land of the Truly Alive" and the "Place of Truly Dead Souls." The explanation given is that his soul has been forced out of his body, and it is his orphaned soul that narrates most of the novel.

That his soul turns out to be an Asian woman named Madman is just the beginning of the hundreds of paradoxes and contradictions upon which Mulligan's story is built. There are sometimes so many different spirits, divinities and demons present — including the ghost of another Scot who fought down death to search the human soul: Robert Louis Stevenson — that one could use a scorecard to keep track of them, as if Mulligan has written a kind of Russian novel of the invisible world.

Some of the most powerful scenes in the novel are the confrontations and dialogues between the living Finn and the soldiers who have already died, including the so-called suicide veterans: the many thousands of combat troops who have taken their own lives since the war ended. What they force him to realize, finally, is that every living vet has a responsibility not only to remember the dead but also to endure, to stay alive, both to tell the truth and to set a hopeful example for his brothers and sisters.

A green light that signals stop, not go

Globalisation has all the appeal of an express train with no driver in the cab, argues **Larry Elliot**

IN MANY ways, D H Lawrence was the prototype green. The constant theme of his novels was the way in which the hard, mechanistic world of the industrial West was sucking the life out of mankind.

This scene from Women In Love is typical. Ursula and Gudrun are two sisters who become attracted to two men, Birkin and Gerald. Birkin is a thinly disguised Lawrence, while Gerald is an industrial magnate set on introducing new methods of working to the family business to boost productivity and growth.

One day the women spot Gerald swimming. Ursula says: "He'll have to die soon, when he's made every possible improvement and there will be nothing more to improve. He's got go, anyhow."

"Certainly, he's got go," says Gudrun. "In fact, I've never seen a man that showed signs of so much. The unfortunate thing is, where does his go go to, what becomes of it?"

Ultimately, Gerald, the symbol of the machine age, dies in the cold emptiness of the high Alps. The metaphor is not that subtle, nor did Lawrence mean it to be. Eighty years on, however, it is still relevant. Observing the start of the annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Hong Kong last weekend, Lawrence would no doubt have said of globalisation: "Where does all the go go to, what becomes of it?"

One obvious riposte is that industrialisation and globalisation have not only survived but expanded their reach because they have delivered the goods. We in the West are all more prosperous than when Lawrence was alive. And would we really want to go back to the standards of nutrition, medical care, dentistry that our grandparents had to endure? The answer, almost certainly, is no. We like our TVs, cars, video players, CDs and foreign holidays, and would be reluctant to give them up. Any critique of modern industrialism has to acknowledge that Western capitalism, based on technological advance and a relentless dynamism, has something going for it. More going for it than a Soviet-style planned economy.

This is what the IMF, the World Bank and the Group of Seven have been saying over recent days. Everywhere, the Western variant of capitalism, in which money chases itself around the globe, is victorious. And yet, as Charles Handy says in his latest book, The Hungry Spirit: "There is an uneasy feeling in the Western world that all is not what we say it is. We have become the prisoners of the money myth."

Money, Handy adds, is a necessary but not sufficient condition of happiness. It matters if you haven't got any but once you have sufficient it is rather like central heating; having more makes no difference.

He cites various measures to show that the *raison d'être* for globalisation — that it can deliver the goods — is flawed. Forty-two per cent of American workers feel used up by the end of the day, 69 per cent would like a more relaxed life, parents spend 40 per cent less time with their children than 30 years ago and, while per capita consumption in the United States has risen by 45 per cent in the past 20 years, the quality of life has fallen by 51 per cent.

Handy concludes that the limits to growth could be psychological and philosophical rather than economic and environmental. In truth, all four factors may be relevant. The plain fact is that globalisation offers a false prospectus. The World Bank's report on China last week extolled the economic transformation that country has witnessed since free-market reforms began in the late 1970s. China has the potential to become the second-richest country in the world by 2020.

Yet here is a fact worth bearing in mind. There are only about two million cars in the country, one for every 700 people. The US has 1.7 people per car. What will that mean for car consumption, for pollution, for the depletion of fossil fuels?

Why should China, however, deny its people creature comforts when the US continues to guzzle gas and refuses to set meaningful targets for reducing emissions of carbon gases?

Gandhi had some wise words to say on this subject. The Earth, he said "provides enough for every man's need, but not for every man's greed". The problem is that the entire basis for globalisation is greed.

The free-market response assumes that everything can be resolved by the price mechanism. Once it becomes profitable to curb pollution, pollution will be curbed. Unfortunately, nobody knows when these signals will be given, nor whether there will be anybody left alive at that point to pick them up.

The reality is, as the American William Greider writes in his new book, One World, Ready Or Not, globalisation is a machine with skilful hands on board but nobody at the wheel. "In fact, this machine has no wheel nor any internal governor to control the speed and direction. It is sustained by its own forward motion, guided mainly by its own appetites. And it is accelerating."

POLITICIANS are aware of this. Many find it disturbing. But the general feeling is one of resignation; nothing can be done to stop this leviathan, and even if it could the voters would not wear it. This is a counsel of despair. Globalisation does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place within nation states, and if nation states chose to do so they could take action to control it. There is no reason why curbs should not be placed on international capital if there were the will to do so.

There was a sharp intake of breath from the IMF and World Bank last week when the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, called for foreign exchange speculation to be outlawed, but a further systemic crisis could prompt calls for action just as the Great Depression triggered curbs on capital in the 1930s.

Robert Rubin, the US Treasury Secretary, said last Sunday that the turbulence in Southeast Asia should not reverse the trend towards financial globalisation, which is just the sort of thing you would expect from a former Wall Street financier. But, while unfettered global capital has undoubtedly enriched a global élite, it has done so at the expense of wild and unnecessary currency fluctuations that have reduced growth rates, pushed up unemployment and been a fundamental cause of growing inequality.

Politically, voters seem to be ready to embrace a different agenda. A British opinion poll last year found that, while the environment did not have the same salience with UK voters as unemployment, 10 million potential voters put it among their top two or three issues. Moreover, three out of four people across the country and eight in 10 of (then) Opposition MPs agreed with the statement: "British companies do not pay enough attention to their treatment of the environment."

This is heartening stuff for those who would like to see the formation of a global red-green alliance dedicated to a new international framework for controlling capital, a tax system that ensures that the full environmental cost of transporting goods and people across the world is reflected in prices, and a more equitable distribution of the world's riches. It is telling that the most radical policies since the British election have come from John Prescott's environment and transport super-ministry.

It would be foolish to over-stress all this. Attitudes change slowly, but voters are starting to ask the questions that Lawrence, Schumacher and Gandhi have been asking for the whole of this century.

Debt relief plan scorned

JAMES WOLFENSOHN, president of the World Bank, rejected criticism last week that debt relief for the poorest nations was going too slowly, *writes Alex Brummer in Hong Kong*.

The Bank and the International Monetary Fund are facing a storm of protest from church groups and charities over the time taken to approve debt relief and the obstacles put in the way of the process.

Oxfam said that the plan was "not just about the complexities of debt relief but saving lives". It said that 190,000 children die for every year debt assistance to Mozambique is postponed.

Mr Wolfensohn appeared less than pleased with the initiative led by the UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to ensure that up to three-quarters of the debtors are in relief programmes by 2000. "If Gordon Brown would like to make a very large contribution I would be happy to accept it," he said.

Among the reasons for delays in clearing countries through the debt plan is the IMF's failure to secure its share of the initiative — estimated to cost up to $8.4 billion. Plans to sell IMF gold to meet the costs have been blocked by Germany and Italy.

In Brief

THAILAND'S beleaguered government pledged to accept a tough IMF rescue package after a fresh wave of currency selling rippled through South-east Asia in the wake of outspoken attacks on speculators by Malaysia's prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad. The financier George Soros called Dr Mahathir a loose cannon and a menace to his country.

PRICE WATERHOUSE and Coopers & Lybrand, two of Britain's largest accountants, plan to merge to create the biggest accountancy firm in the world, leading to fears that fees will spiral, choice will be limited and smaller firms will be forced out of business.

EUROPEAN UNION countries most successful at cutting unemployment are those, like Britain, which have moved fastest towards part-time working, according to an EU survey. Overall one European worker in six is a part-timer, but this rises to one in four in Britain.

INTERNATIONAL gangs sold $5 billion-worth of pirate CDs and cassettes last year, depriving the legitimate industry and threatening the lives of those trying to stamp out the crime, the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry said.

JAPAN'S second and fourth largest stockbrokers, Daiwa Securities and Yaimachi, were raided by financial investigators in a clampdown on corporate protection racketeers. Top executives of Nikko Securities, Japan's third largest brokerage, are set to resign as the country's payoff scandal mushrooms.

GOVERNMENT estimates of the number of Britons mis-sold personal pensions in the $6 billion scandal have been revised upwards to 2 million.

COAL will play almost no part in meeting Britain's energy needs by 2010, a government advisory committee predicted, casting doubt on the future of the remaining 23 deep mines.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates September 22	Sterling rates September 15
Australia	2.2252-2,2282	2.2261-2.2289
Austria	20.21-20.23	19.90-19.92
Belgium	59.27-59.37	58.31-58.43
Canada	2.2241-2.2263	2.2330-2.2350
Denmark	10.93-10.94	10.76-10.77
France	9.65-9.66	9.50-9.51
Germany	2.8723-2.8757	2.8286-2.8313
Hong Kong	12.40-12.41	12.42-12.43
Ireland	1.0972-1.0994	1.0607-1.0632
Italy	2,803-2,809	2,756-2,761
Japan	195.66-195.87	192.95-193.14
Netherlands	3.2346-3.2374	3.1851-3.1882
New Zealand	2.5216-2.5256	2.5202-2.5244
Norway	11.66-11.67	11.65-11.66
Portugal	291.95-292.62	287.84-287.96
Spain	242.39-242.59	238.73-238.91
Sweden	12.30-12.32	12.21-12.23
Switzerland	2.3560-2.3586	2.3289-2.3313
USA	1.6024-1.6034	1.6046-1.6055
ECU	1.4634-1.4651	1.4436-1.4461

FTSE100 Share Index up 172.8 at 5075.7. FTSE 250 Index up 70.3 at 4707.2. Gold down $2.00 at $321.50.



Killing-field detective

David Fairhall reports on the latest attempts to develop an effective way of finding land-mines

RIDDING the world of land-mines requires at least three things: a diplomatic campaign to persuade governments to ban their manufacture, a parallel effort to convince soldiers they can do without them, and a more reliable way of finding the tens of millions that already litter battlefields.

The campaign, which Diana, Princess of Wales, publicised so effectively, is making headway despite resistance from the US military. But the technology used to detect mines has barely moved on since the second world war, although the problem is at last receiving proper attention, military and civilian.

The British army first woke up to the seriousness of the problem — particularly the appalling difficulty of detecting plastic "minimum metal" mines — after the Falklands campaign of 1982. The search for an effective new detection system to replace the familiar metal detector and hand-held probe came up with ground-probing radar (GPR). But the cost — financial and human — proved too much for both the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office, so the minefields were simply fenced off and abandoned.

In any case, the research boffins are unanimous that no one sensor will ever meet the requirement. The most difficult problem is finding the small plastic anti-personnel mine, three or four inches in diameter, whose only metal component is a tiny firing pin, and maybe a small spring. A conventional metal detector can be tuned up to detect this, but it also senses every other scrap of metal in the surrounding earth, which on a battlefield especially, means endless false alarms.

The solution now being pursued by several Nato nations, including Britain, Canada, France, Germany and the US, is a combination of sensors: metal detectors, various types of radar, infra-red thermal imaging, and a technique that British scientists at the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (Dera) are working on — nuclear quadrupole resonance. NQR uses a radio pulse to excite the nitrogen atoms in explosives and record the response, something the Dera team can now achieve with TNT as well as the plastic explosive RDX.

Dera's team at Chertsey, Surrey, and Pershore in Worcestershire, is being funded by the UK government to develop both a vehicle-mounted system and a new hand-held device. The hand-held equipment combining metal detector, ground probing radar and NQR may be ready in three or four years' time. And the vehicle-mounted system known as Minder, which combines up to five sensors, is unlikely to appear in operational form before 2004 or 2005.

Minder looks ahead with ultra-wideband (UWB) radar and a thermal imager, to pick up an early indication, then downward with an array of metal detectors, GPR and NQR, to check for metal content, shape and explosives respectively. The early trials version performs well enough against mines laid out neatly on an airfield runway, but finding mines buried for years under thick vegetation will be more difficult.

Dera is also improving the armoured plough that the army uses, along with powerful flails, to clear and detonate mines. These are all military programmes, but as Dera's countermine project director, Colin Lowe, readily acknowledges, "we'd be crucified by politicians and the public if we just sat on the military technology".

Although Western armies still have little appetite for direct involvement in humanitarian mine clearance programmes (Nato troops in Bosnia, for example, have no plan to stay on clearing the millions of mines buried in the forests there), they increasingly accept responsibility for helping those who do. Military expertise is being shared with non-governmental organisations such as the Halo Trust, the Mines Advisory Group, Oxfam and the Red Cross.

Nato has set up a dual-use study group to ensure the benefits are also available to civilian groups engaged in humanitarian mine clearance. And Lowe says there is a valuable feedback from civ[il] engineering firms adapting agri[cul]tural machinery to dig out, s[ift and] crunch up buried mines.

Alistair Craib, a former ar[my] bomb disposal expert who ra[n the] Falklands clearance programme [until] it was aborted, and who is now [a con]sultant to the European Commis[sion] among others, says the dete[ction] problem is virtually identical for [mili]tary and humanitarian users. "[The] military may want the equip[ment] painted a nice green colour, and [pro]ducing a quieter signal," he s[ays]. "But what they call post-confl[ict ba]ttlefield area clearance is almost [the] same as the humanitarian probl[em."]



Many civilians will be killed or maimed before mine detecting devices become operational PHOTO: KEMBER

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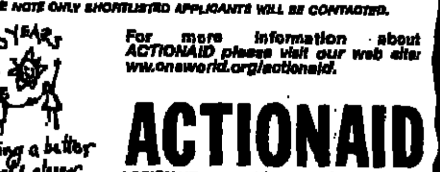
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Please forward your CV to Ms Akila Kassam, International Human Resources Manager, ACTIONAID, Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road, London N19 5PG, UK. Fax: + 44 171 263 7613. E-mail: akilak@actionaid.org.uk. Closing date: 17 October 97.

PLEASE NOTE ONLY SHORTLISTED APPLICANTS WILL BE CONTACTED.

For more information about ACTIONAID please visit our web site: ww.oneworld.org/actionaid.



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International Rescue Committee Finance and Medical Personnel

The International Rescue Committee (IRC), a not-for-profit non-secretarian humanitarian refugee and relief organization is currently recruiting finance managers for Former Yugoslavia, Azerbaijan, Guinea, Liberia, Tanzania, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Requirements: University degree in accounting with CPA, 3-5 years' relevant experience, knowledge of fund accounting, procurement and fin. Mngmnt. Of USAID and UN cooperative agreements, knowledge of SunSystems, MS Office and Excel; at least 2 years' exp. Managing funds for development projects, overseas exp. In refugee setting preferred. Health Personnel for DRC, S.Sudan, Kenya, and Tanzania.: Requirements: MD or RN with MPH, previous experience as supervisor, trainer and health coordinator; Positions for 12 months. For DRC, Former Yugoslavia, and Azerbaijan contact:

Andrew Robarts: andrew@intrescom.org
For East and West Africa Contact:
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For a full job description and application form, please contact Fionuala Murray, CAFOD, Romero Close, Stockwell Road, LONDON SW9 9TY (fax 0171 274 9630 or e-mail nrichard@cafod.org.uk.) Closes: 10 October 1997

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CAFOD

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Country Representative

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We are opening a programme during 1998 in Brazil as part of our continuing expansion in Latin America and Caribbean and therefore are seeking a Country Representative to establish ACTIONAID and launch our work in Brazil.

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With proven long term planning skills, you will have the ability to network and build alliances with other NGOs and communicate with people from a variety of backgrounds. Fluent Portuguese and good English are essential, as is the ability to work independently. An understanding of the significance of gender within development and of the work of international development agencies will be necessary. This post will involve frequent travel within and outside Brazil.

Written applications in English or Portuguese, supported by CV, should be forwarded to Ms Akila Kassam, International Human Resources Manager, ACTIONAID, Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road, London N19 5PG, UK. Fax: + 44 171 263 7613. E-mail: akilak@actionaid.org.uk. Closing date: 31 October 97. Interviews will be held on 4 December in Brazil.

Please note only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.



For more information about ACTIONAID please visit our web site: ww.oneworld.org/actionaid.

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ACTIONAID's work in Africa, Asia and Latin America helps poor communities in both rural areas and cities to help themselves to create a more secure and positive future.

Country Directors
Ghana, Malawi and The Gambia

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Closing date: 15th October 1997. Please note only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

We particularly encourage applications from all African nationals in the development sector, especially women.

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or by contacting the Head of the Department, Prof Alan Newell, FRSE, Tel (01382) 344144. E-mail: afn@mcs.dundee.ac.uk.

Applications by CV & covering letter (3 copies of each), complete with the names and addresses of 3 referees, should be sent to Personnel Services, University of Dundee, Dundee, DD1 4HN, Tel (01382) 344015. Further Particulars are available for these posts. Please quote Reference EST/17/78/GW for the Lectureship and EST/18/78/GW for the Senior Lectureship. Closing date:10 October 1997, although late applications may be considered.

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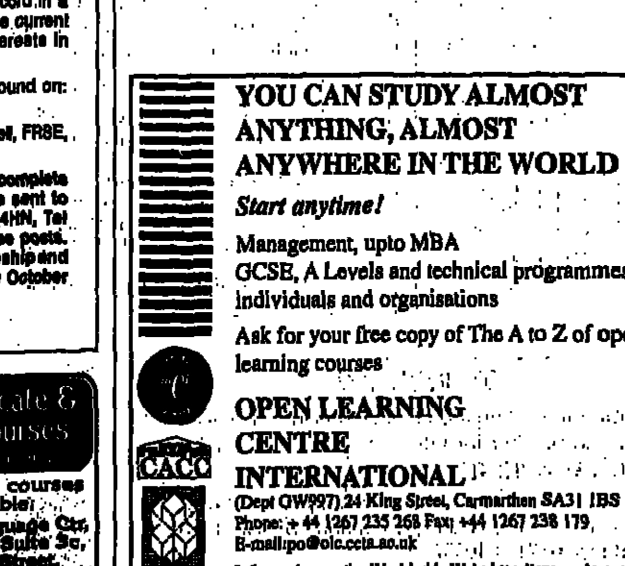
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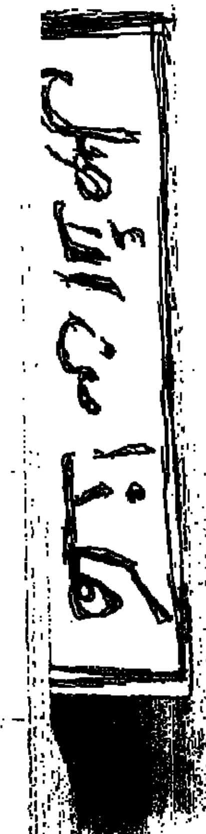
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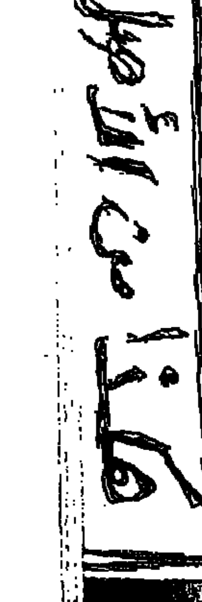
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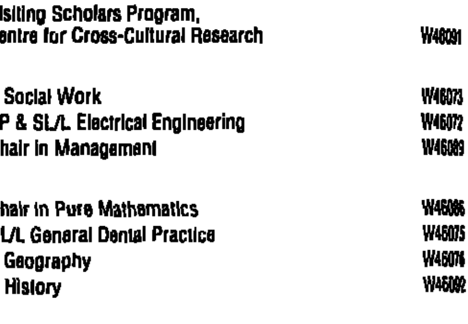


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Working towards equal opportunities.

George Monbiot warns us to beware of chemical giant Monsanto's plans to re-engineer our food

Watch those beans

IT'S EASY to miss even the biggest newspaper ads when you're not looking out for them. The three pages in Britain's Financial Times devoted to the corporate de-merger of a chemical company called Monsanto were not exactly riveting, but could not be ignored. It is one of the few public indications of a new chapter in the world's economic history.

The publicity, aimed at shareholders and corporate customers, announced that Monsanto is to split into two firms, to pursue "applied chemistry" and "life sciences". The life-science division will "provide better food, better nutrition, and better health for all people". With this, Monsanto has embarked on one of the most extraordinary and ambitious corporate strategies ever launched.

The story begins simply enough, with a single chemical. Glyphosate, sold as "Roundup", is the world's biggest-selling herbicide. Last year, it earned Monsanto nearly $1.5 billion, but its patent on Roundup runs out in 2000. Far from sowing corporate catastrophe, however, this event seems likely only to enhance Monsanto's market value. For the past 10 years it has cleverly been developing a range of new crops, genetically engineered to resist glyphosate. Spraying them with Roundup does them no harm, but destroys all the weeds that compete.

New patent legislation in Europe and the United States allows Monsanto to secure exclusive rights to their production. The first "Roundup-Ready" plant that Monsanto released was a genetically engineered soya bean. Between 50 and 60 per cent of processed foods contain soya, so the potential market is enormous.

Alarmed at possible increases in the use of herbicides, as well as the health effects of genetically engineered crops in general, environmentalists and consumer groups in Europe started calling for products containing the new beans to be clearly labelled. But in the US — from where most of Britain's soya comes — Monsanto insisted that it would be impossible to keep Roundup-Ready beans apart from ordinary ones. About 15 per cent of this year's US crop is Roundup-Ready: the chances are that nearly all of us will soon be consuming manipulated soya beans every week.

As the new beans were snapped up by growers in the US, Monsanto began an extraordinary round of acquisitions, buying shares in seed and biotechnology companies worth nearly $2 billion in the past 18 months alone. Among its purchases are companies that produce the famous "Flavr-savr" tomato, own the US patent on all genetic manipulations of cotton, and control around 35 per cent of the germlines of American maize. Monsanto is now experimenting with new rice, maize,



potato, sugarbeet, rape and cotton varieties. It has suggested that within a few years all the major staple crops on Earth should be genetically engineered. The new products are so attractive to many farmers that the company has managed to get them to sign away their future rights to the seed they grow, and allow Monsanto to inspect their fields whenever it wants.

Monsanto's new crops could not have become commercially viable without major legislative change. As members of the trade lobby Europabio, Monsanto and the other big biotech companies have mastered the legal climate in which they operate. Despite significant public opposition, Europabio in July managed to persuade the European Parliament to adopt a new directive, allowing companies to patent manipulated plants and animals. Last week, the European Commission announced that it would force Austria, Italy and Luxembourg to repeal their laws banning the import of genetically engineered maize.

In the US a Monsanto vice-president is reportedly a "top candidate" to become commissioner of the food and drug administration, which regulates the food industry. Researchers and lawyers from Monsanto already occupy important posts in the FDA. It has approved some of the company's most controversial products, including the artificial sweetener aspartame and an injectable growth hormone for cattle. Only the New York attorney general's office has taken the company to task, forcing it to withdraw adverts claiming that Roundup is biodegradable and environmentally friendly.

But Monsanto has been most successful when appealing to multilateral bodies. Last month, the WTO confirmed its ruling that the European Union can no longer exclude meat and milk from cattle treated with bovine growth hormone, despite the protests of farmers, retailers and consumers.

As Scientific American magazine claimed, Monsanto's trials were incompletely analysed, obscuring the fact that it increases infected udder cells in cows by about 20 per cent. Biotech firms are now trying to persuade the WTO to forbid the labelling of genetically engineered foods. Any country whose retailers tell consumers what they are eating would be subject to punitive sanctions.

With astonishing rapidity, a tiny handful of companies is coming to govern the global development, production, processing and marketing of our most fundamental commodity — food.

CLASSIFIED

CAR HIRE

	GROUP	7DAYS	14DAYS	21DAYS	28DAYS
ONE	PEUGEOT 106 VAUXHALL CORSA	95.00	186.00	274.00	353.00
TWO	ROVER 200	129.00	248.00	359.00	469.00
THREE	PEUGEOT 306 DIESEL	146.00	279.00	404.00	514.00
FOUR	TOYOTA COROLLA AUTO ROVER 200 AUTO	179.00	339.00	491.00	639.00
FIVE	PEUGEOT 406 MITSUBISHI CARISMA	199.00	389.00	569.00	739.00
SIX	PEUGEOT 406 AUTO	209.00	399.00	582.00	759.00
SEVEN	PEUGEOT 806	299.00	588.00	869.00	1099.00
EIGHT	TOYOTA PREVIA AUTO	349.00	679.00	949.00	1149.00

Letter from Victoria Jenny Brown

Burning in the bush

WE HANG in suspended animation of a heatwave that is so hot and airless that newly washed clothes are bone dry in 10 minutes. You can't go out of the house, which is an oven after two days of more than 40C, because the direct sunlight is a killer. In southern Australia, we are at the epicentre of the ozone hole, and on cloudless days it will fry your skin and brains. You have been warned.

The leaf litter in the bush is potato-chip crisp, the grass is bleached and dead. The eucalyptus have turned their leaves edge-on to the sun, reducing any hope of shade. The garden familiars — the wallaby and her Joey, the echidna and the baby wombat — are missing, and there is not a bird in the landscape. Not a call, not a song.

We sit indoors bereft of all attempts at conversation because nothing surmounts the singularly-shared sentiment, "Gawd, it's hot".

We watch the tennis on the television to be mesmerised and to concentrate on someone who is even hotter than we are. Some of the players have threatened to walk off or postpone matches because on centre court the thermometer is measuring 50C. They are wiping hands, faces, arms and rackets, and sitting between matches with ice packs on their necks. We feel they earn their money today.

Every so often the *thwock* of the match is interrupted by a Bushfire Update. About 10km from our forested enclave, fires are raging out of control. There are 22 fires throughout the state. Everywhere people are fighting for their property and, in some cases, for their lives.

With each report we go through the mental itinerary that checks off our fire readiness. The firehose is unfurled, the pump primed. The gutters have been cleaned. The paint tins, or anything vaguely combustible, have been hauled away from the house. We have heavy boots, jumpers, scarves and rakes at the ready should we find ourselves in the fight. The local radio station has turned itself into a bushfire broadcaster.

Fire is part of the deal of living in the bush. Our little community of about 60 households is given cohesion because of the fire station at the top of the hill. We have an annual fire drill. We know to tell our neighbours if we intend to flee or sit it out.

We know that if a fire roars up the gully from the river, or over the crest of the hill behind the house, it will be a furious furnace of terror for a few minutes, after which the fireballs of a "crown" fire will have flown, leaving us to put out the spot fires or to douse anything that is smouldering.

The instructions are to pull everything away from the windows, to fill the bath with cold water and to lie on the floor under a wet rug or towel until the main fire passes. Then, with any remaining nerve, attack in the sanest possible manner.

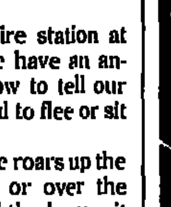
The idea is to fight the fire backwards, not forwards, because the fire wind is the real danger. The wind roars with sparks and embers. It will blow you down or burn out your lungs.

TEN kilometres is a lot of leeway in bushfire territory, but not enough to be complacent about. The wind is blowing away from us, but we can't relax because so many fires these days are started by idiots. This fire, which eventually claimed three lives and 44 houses, was started by two kids. Kids had been lighting fires at the end of the street only a week before. The police presence in the district is heavy today.

Suddenly our valley is filled with smoke — smoke from far away. As the smoke haze grows, the temperature plummets.

By dark, it hasn't rained but the tennis players are happier and the news updates are promising that the fire "is being brought under control". By midnight, the fire truck and the boys have returned to base and a fresh crew is on standby at the station, just in case.

By morning, the ground is wet. The smoke has cleared. And by afternoon, just 24 hours later, the promised thunderstorms have pelted the place and it's hard to believe that I'm in the same country I was in the day before. I wonder whether I need to switch on the central heating.



Supply side . . . A gas-fired plant being built to meet India's increasing power needs PHOTO: POWERGEN

South lines up for an energy boost

Nicholas Bannister

WORLD energy demand will double and electricity consumption triple by 2020, according to a report published last week by PowerGen, Britain's second-largest generator.

The bulk of the increase will come from Asia-Pacific countries, as an increasing proportion of fast-growing populations move from rural areas into the towns and cities.

But demand will also grow in the established industrial nations of Europe and North America as a result of changing lifestyles — including more but smaller households occupied by singles, separated or elderly people.

The report forecasts that governments will accelerate privatisation of energy businesses to cope with the $3 trillion investment needed to expand production to meet demand.

The PowerGen report is timed to coincide with the sixth annual world energy development congress being held in Hong Kong. It says that the United States will still be the largest energy user by 2020, but it will be followed by China, South Korea, Japan and India. The next countries would be Thailand, Indonesia, France, Canada and Russia. Britain, which now ranks as No 8, will not make the top 10.

A Country Diary

Richard Mabey

CAUSSE NOIR, Larzac: The late summer heat seemed to have lulled every living thing into a stupor, and when the winds came they were galvanic. Over meadows carpeted with thousands of tremulous lilac colchicums a swirling crowd of choughs had gathered. We counted between 50 or 60, tumbling and yelping like a flock of giant black butterflies. None of us had seen so many chough together before, so obviously enjoying the wind in their wings. Later, we lunched at the local *buvette* and watched the last crag martins sporting over the ancient limestone farm buildings. They too seemed to be relishing the air's movement, and nothing except sheer effervescent play could explain what they were doing: queuing up by roof-ridge, breasting the breeze, and then flying gently backwards on it.

That evening we were taken to watch the beavers that are recolonising the Dourbie river . It was a fine, quiet twilight, but from our viewpoint, high on one of the banks, we could see that the birds were still energised by the wind. Spotted flycatchers dashed out from the dense bankside vegetation. Dippers and kingfishers whirred close to the water's surface. Then we spotted a beaver, dog-paddling downstream towards us, its flat rudder of a tail clearly visible below the water. Also visible at the bottom were the dozens of small trees the colony had felled for winter food. They lay there like spillikins.

European beavers don't do much in the way of dam-building, but they do fell trees and store them, for freshness, in the cool water at the bottom of rivers, then feed on the bark when other food is scarce.

Above, the beavers experimented at being logs and alligators, then crawled onto the bank and, like everything else that balmy day, gave in to gambolling.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IS THE United Kingdom the only country to have a shipping forecast on a major public service radio network?

TUNE in to France Inter shortly before 7pm (British time), and you'll hear the Météo Marine covering Viking to Sardinia. — *Moira Marshall, Huddersfield, Yorks*

THE Voice of Brazil broadcasts the Aviso Aos Navegantes (Warning to Sailors) daily. — *Lenio Marobin, London*

IN New Zealand, Radio New Zealand broadcasts a shipping forecast daily on its National Radio service. There's also a forecast for mountain areas. — *Peter Sledmere, Wellington, New Zealand*

AUSTRALIA may be unique in having a *space* weather forecast on a major radio station. — *Joss Hawthorn, Sydney, Australia*

WHY do multiplication tables end at 12?

MENTAL arithmetic usually applies to monetary calculations. The United States has always had decimal coinage, and at my primary school multiplication tables ended at nine. Under the old British system, a shilling contained 12 pennies, hence the extended table memorisation demanded of British schoolchildren. — *Joy Lloyd, Misterton, Doncaster*

THEY don't; they end at 10 (except in a few oddball countries). Raymond Wilson's suggestion (September 7) that decimalisation is related to our anatomy is problematic: 12 is as intrinsic to the structure of the human body as 10. It is, for example, the number of finger joints on one hand. Running the tip of the thumb up the joints of the four fingers in turn, starting from the base of the little finger, is an effective way of "counting on the fingers" in base 12 — and was so used by British shop-staff before decimalisation. — *Justin Harris, Siena, Italy*

IN answering this question, Raymond Wilson explained that it reflects the historical predominance of the duodecimal system. This begs a further question: why (as he stated) was divisibility by 3 and 4 fundamental in early societies? — *Ruth Dibbs, Ottawa, Canada*

WHICH country has the easiest driving test?

AFTER making a complete hash of my driving test in Honolulu some years ago, the examiner said that I showed exceptional control behind the wheel. However, he added that I would make a better driver if I learned to relax more, with one hand on the wheel and my other arm resting on the window ledge. — *Joss Hawthorn, Sydney, Australia*

WHY are Anglo-Saxons, unlike other nations, exceedingly tight-lipped about the amount of money that they earn?

BECAUSE the 5 per cent with the money persuaded the 95 per cent that it is bad form to discuss it. — *Dino Bressan, Melbourne, Australia*

Any answers?

WHAT happens to you when you "see stars"? — *Peter Hanson, London*

AM I more closely related to my mother or my brother? — *Margaret Davies, Lockwood, Huddersfield*

WHEN does a gem cross the line between semi-precious and precious? — *Andrew Mellor, Guelph, Ontario, Canada*

MY UNCLE believes that by embedding a piece of copper in the trunk of a tree, you will kill the tree. Is he right? — *Sean Lilliott, Merseyside*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985; or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Women 4, Men 0

John Mullin on mixed reactions to the all-female line-up for Ireland's vacant presidency

NELL MCCAFFERTY, the founder of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement, is babbling, incoherent. Laughter is destroying her. "I could never have dreamed this. It's wonderful, wonderful."

McCafferty has just heard the news on RTE, Ireland's state-owned radio station. Mary McAleese, professor of law at Queen's University in Belfast, has humiliated Albert Reynolds, grand old man of Irish politics. She is to be the Fianna Fail candidate to succeed Mary Robinson as president.

And that makes four: all women. When Ireland's 2.6 million voters go to the polls on October 30, every candidate will be female. And together, they send a message to the world about modern Ireland: no longer are women second-class citizens, victims of an unseemly alliance between the Catholic Church and the patronising chauvinism of its male politicians.

Reynolds, as prime minister, had once dismissed an interruption in the Dail from Nora Owen, former Minister of Justice, by saying: "That's women for you." Never could he have expected such smugness to rebound so badly.

So just what is going on in this presidential race? McCafferty says: "Most people outside Ireland would associate the all-women choice with Mary Robinson's success. She has undoubtedly played a key role in the increasing confidence of women, bringing a dignity to politics while all around the men are embroiled in sleaze. But Ireland is a highly feminised society now. It is not just a process that began with her victory in 1990. It began before that, back when we formed the women's movement."

Each of the candidates, McCafferty believes, brings something of their own to the race for the presidency, formerly the preserve of time-serving male politicians within Fianna Fail. Even the derided Eurovision song contest winner Dana, aka Rosemary Scallon.

Dana, aged 44, astonished pundits by taking on the system to secure her nomination. Any candidate requires the backing of 20 TDs (the equivalent of MPs), effectively making nominations the preserve of political parties. But Dana spotted that the constitution provided another route. In an unprecedented move, she persuaded four county councils to put her forward. She did it, according to councillors in Donegal, Kerry, Wicklow and Longford, with a mixture of charm and determination; no one should underestimate her, says one.

Mary McAleese, aged 46, who beat David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, to promotion at Queen's University, Belfast, where she is now pro vice-chancellor, is another formidable operator. Reynolds was a sure-fire winner, yet, through assiduous telephone canvassing, McAleese brought off a victory no one thought possible.

Adi Roche, aged 42, who has shown considerable diplomatic skills in her impressive charity work, is the standard bearer of the left. Dick Spring's Labour party is her main sponsor — and it was Spring who persuaded Mary Robinson, an apparently hopeless cause, to stand seven years ago.

And then there is Mary Banotti, aged 58, the candidate of Fine Gael, the main opposition party. Grandniece of Michael Collins, founding father of the IRA, she is a long-standing MEP, nominated as European of the Year five times in the past six years. She'd be the first divorced head of state — a mark, perhaps, of how far Ireland has come in the Robinson years.

Vote for me . . . Dana, the Eurovision winner, charmed her way on to the list of candidates

Amid the hullabaloo, however, there are those who are worried. Men, predictably. They can scarcely believe there is to be an election for Ireland's first citizen without one of them standing. They besiege radio shows to declare it unfair. Why that should be so when no such concern applied to women facing exclusively male candidates is a question that has defeated all callers.

And yet the men are not alone. Perhaps it is the conditioning of church and state over the years, but now the old certainties are dead, some women feel fear at the prospect of an election to be fought among themselves. One told Marian Finucane's Liveline show that she was convinced the turnout would be the lowest ever because men feel disenfranchised.

There is concern, too, among Dublin's newspaper columnists. Take Miriam Lord of the Irish Independent. Her thesis is that each of these women, with the exception of Dana, is what their backers — ie, men — believe the voters will buy in the post-Robinson era. Each uses her as their role model; each is determined to outcare the others, rather as Miss World contenders used to do. "Circle the wagons! The four Marys are on the warpath! Their mission is to care, care, care, care, care. Whether we like it or not. It's huggy-wuggy all the way now until October 30. Care is their core."

Ms Lord's colleague, Mary Ellen Synon, is even more scathing, notably of Mary McAleese, whom she accuses of hiding her brain under "a cloud of mock-Robinson fluff".

There are concerns about the candidates' politics and what they might mean for women — Dana's opposition to abortion, for example. But beyond this lies the question of what each actually wants to do in the job — and exactly what the president does. According to the constitution, there are two powers: to refer legislation to the Supreme Court and dissolve the Dail when asked. None of the women appears too bothered with either.

As the debate rumbles on, the last words should perhaps go to Miriam Lord. They are words that strike a chord with many Irish people. "Oh, Holy God. How will we get through the next few weeks? Let's hear it for a Drinkin', Smokin' and Fornicatin' candidate. For the sake of variety, if nothing else. Give the voter the right to choose."

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 28 1997

It started. Now it's finished

TELEVISION
Desmond Christy

SIT YOURSELF down in an armchair, turn down the lights so that only one bulb is shining in your face and ask yourself these two questions.

1) What was the first question asked in **Mastermind** (BBC1) when it started 25 years ago?
2) What was the last question — some 64,000 questions later?

The answer to number one, according to the Guardian's ace librarians, is: "Picasso's Guernica was a protest about the bombing by Spanish planes of a village. In what year did the event take place that inspired the painting?" The answer to number two is this: "Sixty years ago, during the Spanish civil war, which town in the Basque country was destroyed by German bombers, an event which was commemorated in a painting by Picasso?"

We notice, if my cuttings are right, that the first question contained an error (they weren't Spanish planes) and find it corrected 25 years later. But what matters more is that both questions are about a crime that was transformed by Picasso into a great cry of protest against the barbarians.

And then we recall that Mastermind was created by Bill Wright, who had been interrogated for a month by the Gestapo. He transformed a quiz where he was required to pass on all of the questions (apart from name, rank and number, I suppose) to one where the contestants are required to answer everything they can.

It leads me to think that Mastermind was never just a quiz. It was about defending British culture against the barbarians — against a world in which "knowledge" was becoming the stuff that helped you win on Noel Edmonds's Telly Addicts.

Who was Neville Chamberlain? Who was Nemesis? What were the seven wonders of the ancient world? Knowing this sort of thing was what made us civilised. And there's nothing like a quiz to make all that knowledge seem useful.

Magnus Magnusson, as a prelude to the last Mastermind, did not let us go without a history lesson. The last Mastermind came from St Magnus Cathedral on the island of Orkney, "the furthest North we've ever been" and a place which was once under Norse rule. Was Magnus saying, "All that is solid melts into air . . . all those modern things can pass away into ruin and rune"? It was certainly a severe place for a quiz final.

Get on with it, I can hear you saying. Who won? The strange thing was that it didn't seem to matter. The contestants were probably nervous and excited, but it would have been much more interesting to listen to Magnus talking about Norse sagas.

Anne Ashhurst, who writes Mills & Boon novels under the name Sarah Craven, chose Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, as her specialist subject. "To which of Barbara's lovers, found hiding in a cupboard, did the king reputedly say, 'I forgive you, for you do it for your bread'?" She answered, "John Churchill." Which, like almost everything else she said, was correct. She won with a score of 34. Her questions seemed a tad easier than some of the questions asked of the other contestants, but it is hard to judge.

We were happy she won. But we wouldn't have minded if someone else had won. There was very little in it. The applause was unexcited.

Magnus gave a short farewell speech, ending with the words "I've started — now I've finished". He's taking the black chair home with him. I imagine him sitting in it as an old man and wondering if he should have given up so much of his life and intelligence to Mastermind. When the light shines hard in your eyes, Magnus, I think the answer is probably "No."

Up and down the British Isles there are Brians, Paulines, Simons and Sarahs (and Desmonds) who can put away the encyclopaedias, the "Novels of Anthony Trollope", Audubon's The Birds Of America, and Gibbon's The Rise And Fall Of The Roman Empire. No one is ever going to shine a bright light in their eyes and ask them questions as if their life depended on the answer.



The nose has it . . . Antony Sher in Edmond Rostand's Cyrano PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL LIBBERT

A triumph of lonely absurdity

THEATRE
Michael Billington

TWO nationwide touring shows kicked off in Stratford this month. Both are of plays that offer star parts often played in romantic-heroic style. Both, as it happens, take a revisionist line, but whereas Gregory Doran's production of Cyrano De Bergerac in The Swan does so with great success, Ron Daniels's Henry V in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre often goes against the textual grain.

Antony Sher plays Edmond Rostand's Cyrano, and you feel it was an inevitable conjunction. Sher has always specialised in playing solitary outsiders. What he brings to the celebrated poetic swordsman with the big conk is a distilled loneliness. Sher's Cyrano is isolated by his genius as a fighter and a writer and, despite his love for Roxane, seizes upon the liberty this endows.

In the poignant words of De Guiche at the end of the play, "He's one of those rare animals that have opted to be free." This is what distinguishes Sher's Cyrano from recent occupants of the role. He gives us a small, faintly bookish man who is aware of his own absurdity. He is sheepishly shy when he admits his hidden passion to Le Bret, and even stumbles on the word "loneliness" as if he can't quite bear to pronounce it.

But Sher also shows how solitude begets a kind of wild intemperance. He shins down ropes, fights extravagant duels, gladly accepts the leadership of the Gascon cadets who here resemble a hearty, foot-stamping rugby club. He makes you feel these are all displacement activities for Cyrano's painful self-consciousness. He finds something new in the role: the poet-satirist's awareness that the price of independence is separation ("I've missed everything, even my own death"). At the same time he reminds us that Rostand's play survives because it enshrines two romantic myths: Beauty and the Beast, and the ideal of self-sacrifice.

Max Beerbohm said Rostand's hero was a mix of Caliban, Sir Galahad and the punster Theodore Hook: Sher gives us all three. His performance is the first I've seen to convince you that this might be the historical Cyrano who wrote that pioneering sci-fi novel, Voyages To The Moon And The Sun.

Michael Sheen also takes a radically revisionist line on Shakespeare's Henry V in Ron Daniels's modern-dress production. Gone is the old notion of Henry as the glamorous embodiment of England. Sheen is an obsessive, uniformed militarist. In battle, his brutal pragmatism shocks even his most devoted followers: Gloucester tries to seize a hand-mike from him as he threatens the citizens of Harfleur with unspeakable torment. Only in the wooing of Katherine (the astonishing Juliette Greco-like Karine Adrover) does he mature into grace.

You see the idea: this is one of those war-is-hell productions, in which Henry embodies the idea of cynical territorial gain. But, although Sheen is an exciting young actor and loyally carries out the concept, Daniels's version has a monochrome monotony that works against Shakespeare's strangely equivocal play: a national epic that acknowledges the cruelty of war. Here there is little sign of Henry's humour and humanity. When he cries, after the killing of the boys, "I was not angry since I came to France until this instant", it is untrue: he has been in a perpetual lather since he arrived in Calais.

Henry V obviously presents a problem in the modern age. But Daniels's vehemently anti-war production, which might have made more sense in the immediate aftermath of the Falklands, seems oddly out of touch with the present mood: bellicose jingoism is passé and, as many commentators pointed out, the extraordinary events of this month showed the growth of a softer, more feminine spirit. In riding his own particular hobby-horse, Daniels ends up making the play seem less complex, varied and emotionally ambiguous than it actually is.

Life gets sweeter

CINEMA
Richard Williams

ABOUT halfway through Mike Leigh's **Career Girls**, something rather wonderful happens. You've spent the better part of an hour watching incidents from the lives of two ordinary young women. You've seen them as students and coping with the world of work. And then it comes upon you that, before your eyes, these two girls have turned into something very like angels.

That's what Leigh can do. That's what several months of research and rehearsal, of getting the actors to create the characters from within themselves, can achieve. If it does nothing else, even if it fails to tell us a proper story, Career Girls shows us that physical beauty is not the exclusive property of the physically beautiful, even on celluloid.

Apart from similarities of age and general culture, the two women could hardly be more different. As a first-year English student, which is how we initially meet her, Hannah (Katrin Cartlidge) is all anorexic sharpness, spitting contempt, facile wordplay and superficial mind-games. "I'm Hann-AH," she tells a newcomer with a flounce, a Lady Bracknell of the Caledonian Road. "It's maroon," she observes, looking at a piece of furniture. "We're marooned." Instinctively, you'd pay to move to the next postal district rather than deal with her need for intellectual dominance.

But when Annie (Lynda Steadman), studying psychology, arrives from Wakefield to share her North London flat, she brings a dopey passivity and a terminal diffidence — not to mention asthma, nervous twitches, and a horrifying case of facial dermatitis — that form an improbably perfect fit with the habits and temperament of her new partner.

Their time together is spent in a miasma of spliff smoke, takeaway curry fumes, insults and silences, Cure records, second-hand clothes and hardly any sex. The student rituals are beautifully observed. When they need to make a decision, or are overcome by a sudden yearning for a clue to the direction life is taking, they blindly stab a finger at a random page of Wuthering Heights: a post-punk version of the I Ching.

Six years later, Annie is taking the train from Doncaster to visit Hannah. She looks like the secretary she's become. Neat and tidy, dermatitis gone. It's no surprise that she's back living with her mother. Hannah, hardly less brusque and edgy than before, is a junior executive with a stationery company. She has a spruce new flat, a fax machine and a company car. The contrast between their voices — Hannah's rapid London patter, Annie's gentle, deliberate Yorkshire accent — seems even greater than when they first met.

Gradually, in between the reflective reminiscence ("These mugs, remember when we bought them? You had cystitis") and the nervously appraising glances, and despite the apparent divergence of their lives, they rediscover something of their old selves. "That's what I admire about you, the way you deal with men," Annie says. "That's all I do," Hannah replies, "deal with them."

Leigh moves back and forth between the two eras, a device that encourages us to apply our own imaginations to the development of the characters — which would hardly be possible without the remarkable work of Cartlidge and Steadman. You could easily argue that there isn't a proper narrative, and that most of the subsidiary characters are purely functional, inserted merely to open up for us some facet of the women's lives.

"Real people are by definition interesting," Leigh has said, and in Career Girls the people feel real. Perhaps Leigh is a caricaturist, as is sometimes claimed by those who feel uneasy about the way his actors heighten mannerisms. But he is a caricaturist who loves his characters and who can make us love them too.

An emotion very similar to love is what we begin to feel for these two. The sharp angles and the flawed skin resolve into something beautiful, almost classical. Annie's downcast gaze starts to seem less significant than the occasional blazing glance with which Steadman cuts through and denies her congenital meekness. As she covers her head with a blue chiffon scarf there is a moment of astonishing stillness and grace.

But just when we might be starting to drown in affection for Hannah and Annie, Leigh reintroduces their friend Ricky (Mark Benton), a fat boy fuelled on chips with curry sauce, his thoughts and urges obscured by layers of tics and snuffles. With a jolt we are forced to glimpse the world through another set of eyes. Look, Leigh seems to be saying, how well can you really expect to know anyone in an hour and a half?

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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With its portrait of Myra Hindley, tanks of dissected animals and tableaux of mutant children, the Royal Academy's new show, Sensation, appears to be living up to its name. **Adrian Searle** reports

Feeling frenzy

JUST AS the generation of artists who have changed the face of British art over the past 10 years are accorded a major exhibition at the Royal Academy in London, the backlash has begun.

Sensation, a show of work by 42 young British artists from Charles Saatchi's collection, has already led to the resignation of several Royal Academicians over the inclusion of Marcus Harvey's painting Myra, based on the well-known sixties police mug-shot of Myra Hindley. And within two days of the opening, the portrait of Hindley, who was jailed for life for her part in the Moors murders, was attacked with ink and eggs by two men.

A further, feeble scandal was instigated when it was noticed that Chris Ofili's painting of a black Virgin Mary includes a number of elements clipped and collaged from pornographic magazines.

Ofili's paintings, Jake and Dinos Chapman's sculptural tableaux and the works of Sarah Lucas are prime targets for vilification — for their content, their "ugliness" and their lack of moral rectitude.

Accusations of artistic immorality (or, worse, amorality) and aesthetic worthlessness are tiresome to refute: everyone ends up having to listen to an unhappy history lesson.

Sensation is an overdue exhibition. That it is held at the Royal Academy rather than at the Hayward or the Tate feels exactly right. You need to see the show for yourselves to appreciate quite how well these artists inhabit these grand, top-lit salons. Taking these works away from the blank acres of the Saatchi Gallery, and out of the pop, poop and pap pages of the style magazines enables one to see quite how serious and strong the best of the artists are.

There are those who see Sensation as some kind of generational watershed — the moment that the anti-establishment became the establishment. The fact that so many of the artists are genuinely appreciated beyond the art-world ghetto says something about shifts in our culture and our cultural expectations and values. But one thing that becomes clear is that much of the work in Sensation is not as new as it looks. Rather than representing a ground-breaking shift away from High Modernist ambitions and goals, much of it belongs, seamlessly, with the dominant trends of 20th century art.

There are echoes here of Surrealism, with the existential, humanist trends in European sculpture of the thirties, forties and fifties, strong links with Pop art and irreverent appropriations of minimalist manners. That some of the work strains to be transgressive, but ends up rhetorical and lacking in magic or real shock, says something about the way in which we have become inured to extreme images.

What the young British artists in Sensation share, apart from the patronage of Saatchi, and their cloyingly over-documented social life, is harder to define, more a question of attitude than of form. Much of the work is double-edged. It deals with volatile, heavyweight issues while maintaining a calculated air of indifference. There is something suave about much of it, in its heterogenous amalgamation of devices and manners that have appeared in more extreme form elsewhere.

This is especially apparent in Sensation's newer painting: the work of Richard Patterson, for example, owes much to American Pop painters; James Rielly's small, pallid, faux-naïf and slightly sinister figurations are redundant echoes of the Belgian Luc Tuymans. I cannot share Charles Saatchi's enthusiasm for Jenny Saville, whose images may be arresting but whose accomplishments as a painter seem to me to be extremely limited.

Jake and Dinos Chapman's morphed mannequins, with their hard bodies, their dead eyes and their polymorphous perversities, share something with the glossy sheen of Patterson's and Alain Miller's paintings. Their air of indifference, set against volatile subject matter, is the real cool in Cool Britannia.

This is also apparent in the presentation of viscera in Damien Hirst's vitrines. These works are the opposite of expressionism, in that they don't give you any clues as to what the artists feel about the subject matter, or if they feel anything at all.

Face value . . . Marcus Harvey's Myra echoes the mug-shot printed in a thousand newspapers PHOTOGRAPH: ALASTAIR GRANT

They don't tell the viewer what to feel, either. This, I think, is what upsets people so much. We are coerced into looking by all the dramatic devices and hooks at the artists' disposal, and placed in a position where we have to deal with our own contradictory feelings of attraction and disgust. In this sense, we become engaged in the spectacle, and implicated in it.

The unifying feature of much of the work is the friction between content and form, levity and seriousness, vulnerability and aggression.

Saatchi has bought some of the best work produced in this country over the past decade, but also some of the least important. His importance as a collector cannot be overstated, however: without him, his interest and his cash, the energy of the last decade of British art would probably have faltered long ago.

As Marc Quinn's cast of his own head in his own refrigerated blood darkens with age, it has begun to assume the quality of a relic, dragged up from some sci-fi catacomb, while Jane Simpson's strange, bovine piece of furniture, with its refrigerated top, begins to look like the 18th century antique it apes.

The strengths and weaknesses of Sensation can be summed up by two juxtapositions. The show's strongest moment comes in the room containing Rachel Whiteread's Ghost, her cast of the interior of a Victorian terrace living room. This mute plaster-cast looks absolutely stunning here. Having approached it, we turn, and find Richard Billingham's photos of family life on the walls.

The works mirror one another: Whiteread's blank plaster Ghost is a solidified domestic space, bearing the scantest traces of lives lived and of human habitation; Billingham's photographs, on the other hand, expose the everyday lives of his family in shocking, painfully candid detail. What is absent in Ghost is all too present in Billingham's *vérité* photos. I found this contrast incredibly moving.

The second juxtaposition concerns Marcus Harvey's portrait of Myra Hindley. This 12ft-high picture has an uninterrupted view through four doorways to a small room containing an edited version of the Chapman Brothers' woodland bacchanal, first shown at the ICA last year. Between the bushes we see pre-pubescent girls, melded together like minotaurs or Siamese twins. That Hindley's image faces them adds cruelty to insult. It is cheap and pitiless conjunction, none the better for being — apparently — accidental.

The portrait of Myra Hindley is based on a photographic image familiar to just about every adult in Britain. It has been printed and reprinted thousands of times. It is embedded in the national consciousness. That an artist would one day use it was inevitable.

Harvey's rendering of Hindley's image reflects its origins in half-tone newsprint reproductions and digitised, pixelated images. The monumental scale does not necessarily turn Hindley into an icon (not even an icon of evil). The scale of the image has a lot to do with the size of Harvey's pictorial building blocks — not the half-tone dot, not the computer pixel, not even a brush-stroke, but a child's handprint.

Are we to judge the painting on the basis of suppositions about the painter's moral standpoint, or vice versa? Is the image more offensive for being (quite literally) hand-made, rather than mechanically or electronically reproduced? Is the face of Hindley offensive in itself, or because it hangs in the Royal Academy? That it is a painted image, using oil paint, does not necessarily bestow the image with approval. There is some pathos in the fact that this child murderer is constructed with the multiple imprint of an infant's hand.

If the Academy chooses to tear itself apart over the exhibition, that's its lookout. If some resign because Sensation gives offence, others might well be driven to resign if the show is censored. No one is being forced to see these works. But for those with an interest in British art over the past decade, Sensation is essential viewing. The debate, I think, has barely begun.

Pomp amid strange circumstance

PROMS
Adam Sweeting

"*OH, LOOK,*" chuckled compere Terry Wogan, pointing out into the crowd carpeting Hyde Park. "Somebody in a deckchair has died of exposure." It was by no means the warmest day of the year, but at least the piercing blue sky and salmon-tinted sunset meant there was no danger of this second incarnation of Proms In The Park being swept away in a deluge.

Anyway, sitting in a London park in mid-September, watching your breath freeze in front of you, is no more irrational than the Last Night Of The Proms itself. The event's qualities — if that's the word — have long since ceased to be musical. Its formula of school hymns and stout patriotic bluster blows a loud raspberry to all the weird experimental stuff they've been playing during the Proms season proper.

Proms In The Park adds a dash of the unexpected. While the menu remains determinedly middle-brow, and the crowds are doomed to join the traditional rituals inside the Albert Hall in the later part of the evening, the park experience is free to leap about in unexpected directions, as long as none of them lasts longer than five minutes.

Thus, after a warm-up from George Melly, the Pasadena Roof Orchestra and the blazer-and-boater croonings of the Thames Valley Chorus, a Radio 2 jingle introduced Terry Wogan, and Wogan — following a brief eulogy to Princess Diana, whose aura inevitably hovered in the sunset — gave us the BBC Concert Orchestra playing the Radetzky March. Dull? Yes, but soon Joshua Rifkin was playing Scott Joplin's rag The Entertainer, while John Williams contributed a slab of Rodrigo's guitar concerto.

In part two, although there was no escape from Jerusalem and Rule Britannia, park-dwellers enjoyed a temporary diversion while Larry Adler played his harmonica to George Gershwin's Rhapsody In Blue, and John Williams's rendition of Tarrega's Recuerdos De La Alhambra came complete with a Judith Chalmers-style travel video, projected on giant screens.

Edward Greenfield adds: Verdi's Requiem, the penultimate Prom, became a memorial twice over. It was poignant that, when the sudden death of Sir Georg Solti was announced this month, he was due to conduct the Verdi Requiem. By that time, as Nicholas Kenyon, the BBC's controller of music, explained in a moving introduction, Solti had welcomed the idea of making the concert a memorial performance for Princess Diana. It followed naturally that the maestro's name was added to the memorial, with Sir Colin Davis the perfect choice of conductor in his stead.

Perfect too was the choice of work. The "Libera me" from this requiem was included in the Westminster Abbey funeral service, because it was a favourite piece of the Princess's. Solti too had it in his blood. As a great Verdian he regularly drew from this most dramatic of liturgical works an operatic as well as a religious fervour.

That operatic element was the very quality in the Verdi Requiem that for generations prevented British audiences from appreciating this masterpiece at its full worth. One might even speculate that it was that quality, defying established formality, which attracted the princess. Yet how different a British audience is now, most of all this Prom audience, spilling over from the mourning that has been engulfing Britain.

Davis, too, responded to the occasion with a performance both dedicated and dramatic. If latterly in his recordings of great choral works, including the Verdi Requiem, he has too often leaned towards the heavyweight, it was different on this occasion. From the whispered pianissimos at the start he found drama in extremes of expressiveness, drawing the most incisive singing and playing from the London Symphony Chorus and the London Symphony Orchestra.



Bravehearts . . . the romantic heritage of Scotland is reinterpreted in Allen Massie's new novel

Slaves of the zeitgeist

Giles Foden

Shadows of Empire
by Allan Massie
Sinclair-Stevenson 371pp £16.99

*I*N the wake of devolution, Scots should buy this book and one or two others. Novels by the likes of Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, who recorded Scotland's troublesome absorption into that now unfashionable entity, Great Britain — and then themselves became part of the cultural apparatus that marked out Scotland's difference within that entity. Later authors such as John Buchan, a colonial administrator as well as a novelist, reprised this (mainly invented) romantic heritage of old Scotland through empire adventures.

The adventures were real as well as imagined. For the ambitious Scot, success meant "making the English Empire British". Colonial opportunities, combined with the moral extremism of Presbyterianism, were a tonic for nationalist indigestion: settlers in more ways than one, the flower of Scotland packed their bags.

This is the literary background to Shadows Of Empire. The prodigious Allan Massie — chronicler of other fallen powers in his novels about Roman emperors — has produced a tale of four brothers whose various fates at the fag-end of British imperialism are bound to disappoint their father, a minor politician and heir to a wealthy Clydeside shipbuilding family. Clearly based on Buchan, he is also a bestselling author of "shockers" with, like Buchan, an estate in Oxfordshire.

As the boys grow up, we see the father's hopes of national regeneration after the first world war serially dashed by his offspring: shady George, who rejects the family to become a Maughamesque planter in Malaya (and ends up in a Japanese prisoner of war camp); buttoned-up Hector, whose homosexuality, Marxism and job in the Foreign Office leave him well placed as a putative Fifth Man; impressionable Alastair, whose enthusiasm for the cinema leads him to Berlin between the wars and, eventually, fascism.

The fourth brother and narrator of the novel is Alec, a poet who (once his over-heated "colour pieces" have calmed down) becomes foreign editor of a newspaper. His descriptions of his siblings allow Massie — in what is probably his best book to date — to scan the period and offer lively pictures of a world gone by: the Spanish Civil War, Chamberlain and his piece of paper, partisans in Yugoslavia, the Nuremberg trials.

Later on come visions of Scotland as "Maggie Thatcher's theme park", and various intimations of release from that bondage, not all of them savoury.

One reaches the end of this elegiac, beautifully modulated book wondering how the brothers could possibly have made a success of their lives, all of which are circumscribed by forces beyond their understanding. In particular, they are unable to see how insistence on ideological and cultural specificity can paradoxically end up eroding the virtues they are intended to shore up.

In the final pages, set in 1984, the ageing Alec is visited by a young Scottish journalist who quizzes him about his life as they visit Ardlochish House, once seat of his shipbuilding great-grand-father, now a country club hotel. They agree on one thing: that, in the hotel's atmosphere of Scottish baronial fantasy, "the prevalence of tartan was as depressing as the confident babble from the cocktail bar". Here's hoping that the Scottish renaissance, if there is one, amounts to more than that.

States of perception

Adrian Searle

The Epic History of Art in America
by Robert Hughes
Harvill 648pp £35

*R*OBERT HUGHES has been the New York-based art critic of Time magazine since 1970. He has also written marvellous books about the colonisation of his home country, Australia, and the history of Barcelona, and made two highly successful television series. Last year British viewers saw Visions Of America, a series devoted to Hughes's love affair with the United States, seen through the eyes of its art. It was an epic series devoted to an epic tale: big country, big ideas and, sometimes, very big art. And now it's a big book.

American hubris, as well as American philistinism, puritanism, conservatism and — let us not forget — creativity run through this book. Visions Of America takes us from mud-built mission churches to the chill commercial voids of 1980s SoHo commercial galleries, from a 17th century New Mexican sculpture of the Virgin to Andres Serrano's 1987 photo of a plastic crucifix, suspended in a tank of the artist's urine. But it's not all panorama or controversial and landmark artworks: Hughes is vivid on details, on the pointed finials of Shaker furniture and the pop-up headlamps of the 1936 Cord Sedan. He notices things, and his insights and details keep us grounded.

Describing beautifully an 1872 Luminist painting of the sea and coastline of Long Island, he says: "It is as mysterious and almost as abstract as a Rothko, and yet no one who has sailed or fished those waters can fail to recognise its perceptual truth." One can be sure Hughes has done both.

As much as it is a vision of America, Hughes's book is a vision of Americans. He is great on characters, and on the put-down. Writing about Puvis de Chevannes — who showed more than 30 canvases at the cathartic Armory show, which first brought European modernism to New York in 1913 — Hughes calls his work "Low-Protein Poussin". That's exactly right. Mabel Dodge, hostess and a member of the Armory committee, was a "manic-impressive heiress . . . the Miss Piggy of the early American *avant-garde*", whose leftwing sentiments did not interfere with her "relentless narcissism". Then there is John James Audubon, undoubtedly the greatest ornithological painter. According to Hughes, Audubon, the illegitimate son of a French merchant and slaver, and a Haitian chambermaid, was "self-inflated, paranoid, and a bit of a thug".

At times, Hughes himself blusters and bullies, but it is all a matter of striking a balance in a book aimed at a general reader: putting the essentials to the fore, keeping us alert with savoury anecdotes, entertaining himself, and mostly his readers, with his asides. Along the way we learn about sawmills, quilts, sharks, sacred mountains (in Catalonia as well as in the West), Grant Wood's repressed homosexuality and its importance in reading his apple-pie icon American Gothic, Marsden Hartley's political naivety, in-fights and insurance scams, and much more.

As we move closer to our own times, the harder it is to be clear about what is important and valuable in art. History loses its grip, and hype and gossip, friendship patterns and animosities take over. Hughes is aware of this, but not immune from it. His reading of post-war art, and especially that of the 1970s onwards, becomes more troubled and less assured. He's more at home, one feels, in the age of Herman Melville, Henry James and Sargent, on the rivers and seas of Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer, or on the wagon-train route with Albert Bierstadt, heading into the sunset of the Sublime.

America, once distant, exotic and dangerous, became, in the postwar years, the centre of the international art world. New York became Art-world. Recently, it has begun to lose its claim as the home of the artistically brave. There are more artists in America now — Hughes makes this point somewhere — than there were people in 15th century Florence. Sorting out what's valuable has become extremely problematic. No wonder he gets bellicose towards the end of the book. But that said, it is an honest reflection of his perceptions. And that's the best we can ask of any critic.

To order this book at the special discount price of £30, contact CultureShop (see ad on page 29)

Paperbacks Nicholas Lezard

Language Is Power: The Story of Standard English and Its Enemies, by John Honey (Faber, £8.99)

*I*N WHICH Professor Honey makes a stirring defence of standard English, claiming (in short) that the underclass is always going to remain the underclass until they learn to speak proper. It's not actually a joking matter. He produces numerous spine-chilling instances of teachers who are discouraged from correcting faulty grammar, and educationalists and sociolinguists who regard as anathema the idea that one version of the language can be inferior to another; who hold that fluency and capability in standard English is a straightforward perpetuation of the class system.

There are two main problems. The first is that response to this book will divide on rigidly predictable political lines — the left will go boo, the right will cheer. But I see no contradiction between a desire for social justice and a desire for empowerment through confidence in one's fluency. The other problem is that Honey seems to be on the way to thinking that standard English is some kind of magic wand that can be waved against a collapsing society. Worth looking at, even if only to disagree. But see Dick Leith's book, too.

A Social History of English, by Dick Leith (Routledge, £12.99)

*L*EITH has a very hard time in Prof Honey's book. "For Leith, standard English was essentially created in the 16th century by government functionaries and small groups of literati, a term he uses to mean an exclusive and snobbish group of intellectuals." I'm not sure he means that at all. Leith's book (updated from the 1983 edition) is very learned, forgiving and clear-headed. It is the one to turn to if Honey's is too depressing.

Anthology of Black Humour, by André Breton, trs Mark Polizzotti (City Lights, £15.99)

*B*RETON'S collection, designed to provide an *entrée* to the Surrealist state of mind by letting people know what he thought funny, took him longer to produce than almost any of his other works, made him unpopular with the Vichy government, and didn't earn him a bean. But it's fascinating, as it shows not only who he thought were the most important Surrealists of his time, but who he considered Surrealists *avant la lettre*. Contributors you may be familiar with: Swift, Lewis Carroll, De Quincey, Nietzsche, De Sade.

Take Me There, by Paul Mathur (Bloomsbury, £5.99)

*S*UBTITLED "Oasis the story" [sic]. If you want to know their story, this will certainly be helpful; Mathur spent three years with them, with his head stuck firmly up their arses. Sorry, I mean, with his eyes and ears wide open and his notebook ready for action. "And now, in the San Francisco hotel bar, Liam explains what Oasis are all about. "You f***ing know, Paul. We're the best band in the world. By miles." Thank you for clearing that up for us.

Camden Girls, by Jane Owen (Penguin, £6.99)

*S*O ME and Juno and Melissa were hanging around The Good Mixer when this girl from Penguin asked us if we wanted to be novelists. Sounds a laugh I said but I don't know nuffink about that. So she said just go on about what it's like being a top babe taking loads of drugs and hanging around with musos. So I said I dunno I'll think about it. She said it's easy, we'll do the selling for you, we'll call it part of this new movement called BritLit. And I said but I'll write the worst novel that's ever been written and she said who's going to read it? We just want to get the publicity.

Little-Known Museums in and around London, by Rachel Kaplan (Abrams, £13.95)

*N*OTHING special about this book, except that it is exactly what it claims to be, it is fun to browse through, and is useful. Check out the Cabaret Mechanical Theatre, the Clink Prison in Clink Street, and the Dennis Severs House, the only house in London still lit by gaslight. Probably the book's expensive because it has many colour pictures.

Following the formula

James Wood

Enduring Love
by Ian McEwan
Jonathan Cape 247pp £15.99

*I*AN McEWAN'S fictions are prodigies: they do everything but move us. This new novel is full of those lean virtues that stretch his past work. The anxious discipline of his prose style (its subdued artistry); the acute, superintendent intelligence, shaping and ordering the material; the thematic geometry, whereby McEwan bends each fiction into intellectual inquiry. Yet a writer this talented should be better than McEwan is.

McEwan is a good and not a great writer because he seems to lack a capacity for deep aesthetic surprise. Instead, he has become increasingly a novelist who trades in narrative surprises — secrets, disclosures, hidden symbols, the gurgitations of the unconscious. His stories can function as symbolic code-work because they are over before we have time to resent their calculatedness. But his novels suffocate with design. They trap their subjects in prim webs of information and argumentation.

Enduring Love can thus be seen as the fruit of McEwan's love of fictional neatness. For it is essentially a snappy thriller, sprung on a bed of conceptual horsehair. It is clever and immensely gripping. Its protagonists have more plausibility than they would have in an actual thriller, but not much more life. In general, the book has a thinness of literary texture (perhaps half a dozen really striking sentences) which represents a considerable starvation of McEwan's rich early stories. It is the thriller conventions that weaken the novel's ability to move us, and that demote its status as a literary artefact.

The plot almost exactly matches the ideal scheme commanded by Syd Field, in his how-to manual, Screenplay: The Foundations Of Screenwriting. The Hollywood formula, according to Field, is tripartite: set-up; confrontation; resolution. Field suggests that the classic thriller involves a subject who is the victim of a danger which is revealed to us in the set-up; in the second act, the victim has to confront this danger; and in the third act, the victim must go from being a victim to an aggressor — he must react to, and conquer, danger.

McEwan's novel proves Field durable. In the first chapter (superbly described — the best passage in the book), Joe Rose, who narrates the novel, witnesses a terrible accident in which a man dies. This is the "set-up". One of the other witnesses of this accident, Jed Parry, conceives a violent love for Joe. He begins to stalk Joe, to phone him, to write to him four times a week, and to hang around outside his house. He issues what seems like a verbal threat.

As is familiar from the movies, no one really believes Joe. The police are indifferent. Clarissa, Joe's girlfriend, feels that Joe is exaggerating. But Jed Parry gets violent: he sends two men into a restaurant to shoot Joe. They get the wrong table. Still the police are unconvinced. So Joe, in Field's terms, becomes an aggressor. He goes it alone. He buys a gun. At this point, the book becomes a little ludicrous, as convention encourages. Driving back from the gun purchase, Joe is phoned on his cellular by Jed Parry. Jed has taken Clarissa hostage in their Maida Vale flat. Joe arrives at his house and shoots Jed, who is put in an asylum for the rest of his life.

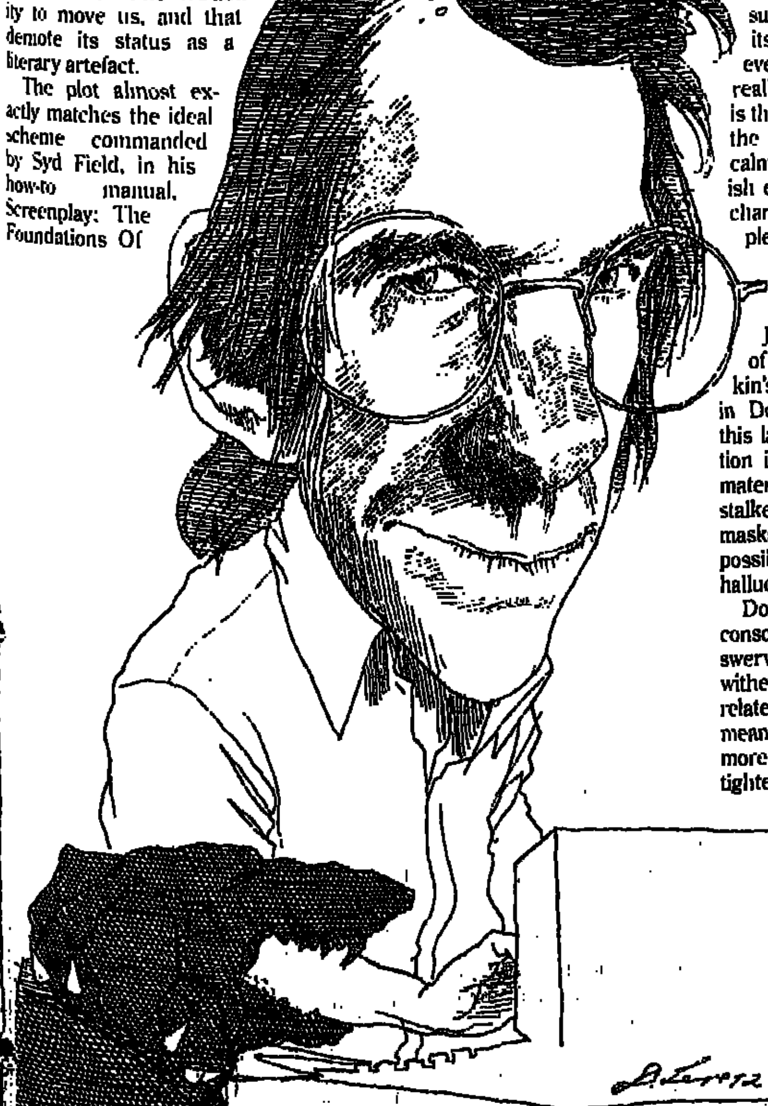
It is a pity that McEwan felt a need to serrate his plot to this blade-like acuteness. For a thicker story, which is McEwan's real interest, gets cut away in the process, and is rather mocked by the narrative excitements. McEwan wants to examine how the irrational might undermine a man's rationalism; and how two people who supposedly love and know each other — Joe and Clarissa — can interpret the same experience quite differently, and quite selfishly.

Joe is a science writer, a rationalist who is persuaded by the latest evolutionary biology. Clarissa is a lecturer in English, who finds Joe's rationalism too neat and univocal. Once Joe is being stalked, McEwan puts a number of paradoxes into play: it is Joe, the rationalist, who loses control; it is Clarissa, the emotionalist, who becomes unemotional. Once Joe feels that he lacks Clarissa's support, he decides that he is on his own. But, paradoxically, Clarissa complains that she cannot support him because he has retreated inside his own emotions. We see two people struggle to adapt to a terrible experience, an event whose degrading significance they can only understand after it has broken their relationship apart.

*W*HY does all this make a hard, clean read, but fail to make a true literary achievement? Partly it has to do with McEwan's intellectual cleanness, and his decision to clothe his story in thriller dress. We accept McEwan's argument about rationalism and irrationalism, about the adaptive biology of the relationship, because it is so smartly handed to us. But we hardly experience it as animate fiction. It remains argument.

This is a formal problem. Joe is supposed to be driven to the limits of his rationalism by the events of the book. But we do not really see these limits because he is the narrator of the book and tells the story in such McEwan-like calm. And then the book's thrillerish excitements begin to strip the characters of their potential complexity. For a while, early in the book, it looks as if McEwan might be essaying a study in mental breakdown, and that Joe's stalker might be a figment of his imagination, as Mr Golyadkin's stalker might be his creation in Dostoevsky's The Double. But this layer of ambiguity and suggestion is pushed aside by the sheer materiality of the plot. As soon as the stalker is sending hit-men in latex masks to restaurants it becomes impossible to believe that Joe might be hallucinating.

Dostoevsky's supreme interest is consciousness. But McEwan's novel swerves from consciousness and withers, like the genre to which it is related, into a game of ways and means (guns, hostages, rescue). And more importantly perhaps, the plot-tightening steers the book away from aesthetic surprise: how can a language of real complexity compete with all this noise? In the end, this is one of those books that describes life-changing experiences and yet leaves the reader unchanged. At bottom, this is because its central characters barely exist for us; they have no afterlife in the mind.



Dark side of the tracks

Natasha Walter

Night Train
by Martin Amis
Jonathan Cape 150pp £10.99

***I*F YOU usually like Martin Amis's books, you probably won't like Night Train. At the age of 24, with the publication of The Rachel Papers, Amis already sounded jaded; by the time he was 35, with the publication of Money, his voice was so world-weary that nothing could come as any kind of shock to him or to his readers. He charted the descent of sex into pornography, of friendship into envy, of ambition into greed — all with emotionless aplomb.**

With Night Train, Amis has taken a rather different direction. This is not a strikingly clever book, and it isn't funny. It reads like the work of a much younger man than his other novels. Unlike his other works, it asks you not to keep your distance, but to come close and suffer with the narrator.

The narrator in question is Mike Hoolihan, a policewoman in a generic American town, who is working on an odd case: the suicide of a young woman called Jennifer Rockwell. Mike knew Jennifer before her death, and knew her as a young woman whose open smile, cool intelligence, social warmth and beauty marked her out as extraordinarily blessed. And so the discovery of Jennifer in her pretty apartment, naked, with her brains blown out, strikes Hoolihan not just as a shock, but as an endlessly troubling mystery.

As Hoolihan attempts to lay that mystery to rest, Amis takes us down the paths of the traditional detective novel: the autopsy, the interviews with Jennifer's doctor, lover and friends in dingy bars and smoky police cells. But the point of this detective story is that there is no point; Jennifer didn't commit suicide for any of the comfortingly banal reasons that Hoolihan tries to ascribe to her — clinical depression, sexual imbroglios, work crises, money troubles.

Hoolihan is really the heroine of this tale; the woman who works in a man's world and has a man's name, but remains tied into traditional feminine virtues — compassion, sincerity, that sort of thing. In her and in Jennifer Rockwell, Amis turns a corner; for the first time he has created heroines who are defined not by their underwear and the size of their breasts, but by their work and relationships and human disappointments.

What's more, the two women have a connection even after death. Here we have the usual Amis pairing of an ugly, unlucky protagonist set against a beautiful, lucky one; the same pairing that we see in Success or The Information. But here it leads to empathy, not enmity. As Hoolihan hunts through the false clues that Jennifer leaves her, she struggles to enter fully into her mind, and Jennifer's despair gradually becomes her own. It is impossible to overstate the difference that this current of ordinary sympathy makes to Amis's imaginative world. It makes a juddering contrast with the plot's nihilism, and that unresolved conflict between love and cynicism gives this book a haunting, unsettling quality that Amis has never achieved before.

All this is not to say that Night Train is an unadulterated success. It may be emotionally richer than Amis's previous novels, but in terms of style and form it doesn't measure up. For a start, its brevity doesn't allow the themes the space they require. Too often Amis uses shorthand images culled from films and fiction, or riffs of rhetoric that haven't been tied in to experience. Why, for instance, are we told in just one paragraph that Hoolihan was abused by her father? Child sexual abuse has been used too often in fiction as the key to a woman's past to be anything but a dim cliché unless it is brought fully alive.

And Hoolihan's dialogue keeps slipping into flat rhythms that have been culled from American screen cops. After her appearance in Night Train, Hoolihan could take bit parts in Cagney and Lacey without missing a beat. "'Who the fuck wants to know?' 'The law,' I said, 'that's who the fuck wants to know,'" or "'You feel like you need a lawyer? You feel like you need a lawyer, hey, we can whistle one up.'" When Amis slips away from such talk, he sometimes slips up; can you credit a detective sergeant who compares Robespierre's and Cicero's prose style?

Even the image of the night train isn't worked through. It's a sound that cuts through Hoolihan's apartment night after night, but I think we heard that symbol of urban anomie in the trashy Hollywood film, Seven, and it's not much subtler in Amis's hands than it was on the screen. As Hoolihan remarks at one point: "TV, etc, has had a terrible effect on perpetrators . . . But TV has also fucked up us police. No profession has been so massively fictionalised." Indeed, Amis staggers under the dead weight of "TV, etc" — it dulls his responses and slows down his prose.

But through all its losses and lapses, something remains with you at the end of this book. "Ever have that childish feeling, with the sun on your salty face and ice-cream melting in your mouth, that you want to cancel worldly happiness, turn it down as a false lead?" asks Hoolihan. Amis has remembered that the sun is out there, even if it is a false lead.

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The hills are alive

Paul Evans


ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

BANG! In the clear, still Alpine air, an ear-splitting noise like a sonic boom exploded and its echoes bounced around the high mountain cliffs. Perhaps it was an avalanche or a glacier cracking, goodness knows, but it was certainly a reminder of how vulnerable you can be in the mountains, even on a bright, sunny day. A little memo from Nature perhaps.

The narrow trail to Oberbargli traverses the cliffs and scree slopes of Oschischafberg with a precipitous drop to the wonderfully deep blue lake, Öeshinensee, far below. Opposite, the massive snow-topped peaks and glaciers of the Blümlisalp mountain circle around, enclosing this great hole in the alps of the Bernese Oberland, just to the east of the town of Kandersteg. This vast amphitheatre of rock, ice and water seems set for divine dramas on a scale beyond the imaginings of those unfamiliar with such huge mountains.

Although I did see eagles hunting along a high ridge, I did not see chamois. This was probably because of the presence of determined-looking men with felt hats carrying rifles. It was the first day of the chamois hunting season and I assume the chamois were ahead of the game and had skidaddled. No new windscreen wash-leathers for the hunters today.

Within this world of giant scale, the largest animals, apart from a few hikers, are the bell-clanging cows that seem to defy gravity and graze contentedly on impossible slopes. But it is what they graze on that is so remarkable.

The Alpine meadows, famous for spring flowers, are in bloom throughout their short season. Swathes of fleshy-pink meadow saffron — the poisonous, autumn flowering crocus; gentians of an intense blue that mirrors the sky above the ridge tops and the lake below; carline thistles, burnet and saxifrages sparkle in the mountain sward.

There seem to be more species of wildflowers in one square metre here than you could find in the whole of some English counties. This is partly due to the richness of the mountain limestone flora and partly because of the way it has been managed for countless generations.

Transhumance — grazing cattle on the mountains in summer and taking them down to the valleys in winter — is still practised. The meadows are also regularly cut throughout the growing season. Even after just a few inches growth, farmers head out with their mowers and rakes to make hay whenever the sun shines.

The more macho farmers seem as gravity-defying as their cattle, mowing and raking in places were most of us would want a rope to hang on to. The overall effect is a sort of obsessively tidy gardening of the mountain sides, in great contrast to the wild, jagged anarchy of the ridges and peaks soaring above.

With the flowers come the butterflies: clouded yellows, fritillaries and tortoise shells, even at altitudes above the tree line. In the scree, the loose stone glaciers that flow from the crags above, live highly specialised plants and animals.

The cliffs above Oberbargli are home to a colony of alpine choughs. These smaller members of the crow family, with black plumage, red legs and buttercup yellow beaks, swirl in ragged aerial gangs. The choughs call with a strange trilling that seems to both celebrate and challenge the breathtaking world they inhabit.

From a scattering of spruce, juniper and dwarf mugo pines that have found purchase on a rocky promontory, comes the thin warble of the goldcrest. Europe's tiniest bird in Europe's most magnificent landscape. Some of the finest dramas happen on such a minutely subtle scale.

Chess Leonard Barden

AN ENGLISH victory in Europe and a sophisticated version of a classical sacrifice were combined in a recent Hungarian invitation at Balaton, where Peter Wells, the lowest-rated of five competing GMs, won first prize with 61/2/10. The Greek Gift is a tactic where a bishop is offered for the h7 pawn, followed by a knight check at g5 to smoke out the castled king. It's often easy to play, but not here:

Wells v Dumitrache

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 Bd6 7 0-0 0-0 8 e4 Nxe4 9 Nxe4 dxe4 10 Bxe4 Re8?! Black's opening choice is either provocative or naive, for Wells's Batsford book on the Semi-Slav is the definitive work on this defence. Here h6 is better.

11 Re1 c5?! 12 Bxh7+! Kxh7 13 Ng5+ Kg6 A classical Greek Gift setting (Black R and B misplaced, White Q and R ready to join the attack) but less simple than it looks. If Black retreats Kg8 then 14 Qh5 Qf6 (or Nf6 15 Qxf7+ Kh8 16 Re4!) 15 Qh7+ Kf8 16 Ne4 Qf5 17 Qh8+ Ke7 18 Qxe8+! wins.

14 g4! 14 Qd3+ f5 15 Nxe6 Rxe6 16 Rxe6+ Nf6 is unclear. **Nf8** White threatened 15 Qd3+ f5 16 Rxe6+. **15 Qd3+ f5 16 Qh3 Kf6 17 Qh5 f4** g6? 18 Qh8+ and Ng6 18 Nxe6? lose faster.

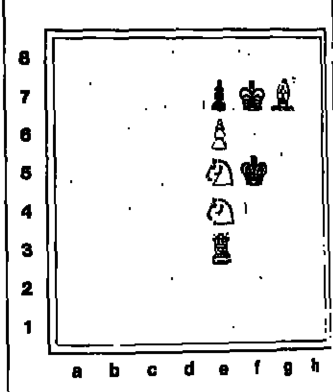
18 Re5! The only way, since 18 Qxf7+? Kxg5 fails. White needs to control the fifth rank. **Qd7** Not Bxe5 19 dxe5+ Kxe5 20 Nf7+ and wins. **19 Bxf4 Bxe5 20 Bxe5+ Ke7 21 Nf7?!** An inaccuracy (21 dxc5!) since Black can now make a fight of it by 21 . . . Rd8! clearing e8 for the K.

Qa4? 22 Bd6+ Kd7 23 Qxe5 e5 24 d5 Ne6 25 Nxe5+ Kd8 26 Bc7+! Resigns If Nxc7 27 Nf7+ Kd7 28 Qd6 mate.

Jonathan Levitt's book, Genius In Chess (Batsford, £12.99), is an interesting mix of analyses of how chess talent relates to IQ and creativity, examples of tests that GMs and others took and multiple-choice posers on all phases of the game. Diagnosing talent early is important for many chess coaches and teachers, and it is a pity that the author didn't aim for a more comprehensive work that could be used in schools and junior clubs. Even so, the book can help you improve.

Levitt quotes one test of his own that I really like for sorting out the inspired from the perspirers. Place a white knight on b1, black queen on d4. Now manoeuvre the N from b1 to c1 without taking the Q or landing on any square the Q controls. Even this first step is not easy, but then the knight has to visit e1, f1, h1, a2, c2 and so on up the board in sequence, again without putting the N *en prise* to the Q at any stage, until you reach g8 (h8 is controlled by the BQ). Even Britain's best GM, Michael Adams, took more than five minutes to complete this tough test.

No 2491



White mates in three moves against any defence (by Pal Benko, Chess Life 1993). Yes, the piece arrangement really is intended as a letter F, and Benko composed it as part of a problem sextet to celebrate Bobby Fischer's 50th birthday. A gracious tribute considering that (a) Fischer threw a punch at Benko in 1962 and (b) Fischer has not read his copies of Chess Life for 20 years due to an obscure dispute with the USCF.

No 2490: 1 Rh3+ Kg4 2 Kg2 (threat 3 f3 mate) Rc2 3 Bh5+ Kf5 4 Rf3+ Ke4 5 Bg6 mate.

Quick crossword no. 385

Across

1 Come down from (8)
5 Employed — not new (4)
9 Precise (5)
10 Torture (7)
11 Workers' dining room (5,7)
13 Coarse (6)
14 Collision (6)
17 Member of church governed by elders (12)
20 Hard varnish (7)
21 Fool (5)
22 World's longest river (4)
23 Colourless gas (8)

Down

1 Intense (4)
2 Race official — gets car going (7)
3 Unexpectedly (3,2,3,4)
4 Spot — poster (6)
6 View (5)
7 Set off (8)
8 Orange-flavoured liqueur (5,7)
12 Airship (8)
15 Astounding (7)
16 Tier of building (6)
18 Surpass (5)
19 Stupefy (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE Complete Book Of Bols Bridge Tips, edited by Sally Brock and published by the Chess and Bridge Centre, contains advice from the world's best players that can be easily understood and applied by everyone from beginner to expert. The title, alas, is accurate, for the Bols liqueur company that sponsored the Tips over a period of more than 20 years will do so no longer.

Swedish international Per-Olof Sundelin provided a Bols tip that was used to good effect in the recent EBU Brighton Congress. Its victim was no less a player than the great John Collings — but, as you'll see, the defence could succeed only because declarer was a first-rank performer. Take John's cards as South in four spades:

♠ AJ1094
♥ 63
♦ 7
♣ A7653

♠ Q82
♥ K75
♦ AK64
♣ Q92

You have bid the hand well to protect South's king of hearts from the opening lead:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥(1)	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) A transfer bid, showing spades

West leads a diamond to East's queen. You win with the ace, cash the king of diamonds, discarding a heart from dummy, and run the eight of spades to East's king. East plays a heart, on which you try the king, but this loses to West's ace. West continues with the jack of hearts, which you ruff in dummy. Needing to avoid more than one loser in clubs, you lead the three of clubs from the table. East follows with the eight. How will you continue?

John Collings did not believe that East would find it easy to play low on dummy's club lead if he held the king. After all, this would cost a trick if South held Qx in clubs. So, playing for the club position to be something like:

	♣A7653	
♣KJ4		♣108
	♣Q92	

he covered East's eight of clubs with the nine. West would win with the jack, but Collings would later cross to hand with the queen of spades and run the queen of clubs pinning East's ten and making his contract by a brilliant "intra finesse". Alas for John, this was the full deal:

North
♠ AJ1094
♥ 63
♦ 7
♣ A7653

West
♠ 765
♥ AJ104
♦ J983
♣ J4

East
♠ K3
♥ Q982
♦ Q1052
♣ K108

South
♠ Q82
♥ K75
♦ AK64
♣ Q92

John lost two club tricks and trump control to end four down in his game contract.

Per-Olof's Bols tip, which East applied to such effect, was simply: "If you can't see yourself beating the contract by winning the trick, duck it!"

Football Premiership: Chelsea 2 Arsenal 3

Winterburn blast shatters Chelsea

David Lacey

ALREADY Arsenal are looking the most likely alternative to Manchester United as champions, and for the second time this season they are trying out second place, which is the back entrance to the Champions League, for size. In fact, after winning at Stamford Bridge last Sunday, they are now two points behind United and could go top on later in the week.

A late goal from Nigel Winterburn, his first for 18 months, ended the resistance of a Chelsea team reduced to 10 men by the dismissal of Frank Leboeuf, their French sweeper, midway through the second half. Just when it seemed that Ruud Gullit's reorganised defence would hold out, Winterburn unleashed a left-footed shot from 25 yards that curled beyond the reach of Ed de Goey and into the top right-hand corner of the net.

The moment brought a fitting conclusion to a match which had started with a series of inconsequential clinches but broadened out into one of the more memorable London derbies once each side had scored towards half-time. Dennis Bergkamp scored Arsenal's first two goals to bring his season's total to seven.

This was a complex game. With three Italians, three Frenchmen and three Dutchmen on the field, plus a Romanian and a Uruguayan, with a Channel Islander thrown in for good measure, the football was never going to lack variety.

True, it did not often flow as it can do when Chelsea are in full cry, and Arsenal were able to bring a patient, possessive approach to their game only after Leboeuf had been sent off. Even so, the touches of skill and improvisation which both sets of players managed to produce in a match of high speed and little space made it all very watchable.

At one point there were portents of England's imminent World Cup qualifier in Rome when, with Tony Adams now restored to their back four, Arsenal's English guardsmen looked capable of holding Gianluca Vialli, Gianfranco Zola and Roberto Di Matteo until dusk. Indeed by the end, only Zola of the Italian trio remained.

Before losing Leboeuf, shown the red card by Dermot Gallagher for his second bookable foul on Bergkamp, Gullit had taken off Vialli and Di Matteo. The Chelsea manager clearly felt that against Adams and Steve Bould he needed Mark Hughes's strength in holding the ball up and the additional height of Tor Andre Flo.

At 2-2 Chelsea, as the home side, still had a game to win but once they were down to 10 men their main aim was survival. Gustavo Poyet moved into the back four alongside the excellent Michael Duberry and Mark Hughes withdrew to midfield, leaving Flo alone up front. Until Winterburn struck, this reshuffle looked like preserving a point for Chelsea.

Nearly half the match saw Dennis Wise and Di Matteo trying to outmanoeuvre Vieira and Emmanuel Petit in midfield in order to establish attacking links with Vialli and Zola. Chelsea found it hard turning their greater possession into scoring opportunities, although an early shot from Poyet might have brought a goal had it not been smartly blocked by Bould. But they did take the lead, five minutes before half-time when Poyet put the ball past Seaman.


Joy unconfined . . . Bergkamp's Arsenal team mates and fans celebrate his second goal PHOTOGRAPH: BEN RADFORD

That goal broke the game's stifling midfield mould and Arsenal drew level a minute before half-time. In the best-worked move of the afternoon Vieira flicked the ball up, Ian Wright nodded it through and Bergkamp, who had anticipated the moment, strode clear to slip a low shot past De Goey.

After that one always felt that, whatever Chelsea achieved, Arsenal would probably match it. In fact they went ahead a minute before the hour, courtesy of a defensive muddle by the opposition. Duberry and Leboeuf got in each other's way going for the same ball and Bergkamp gratefully drove Arsenal in front.

Not that their euphoria lasted long. Within a minute Leboeuf's quick long pass had beaten the offside trap, allowing Mark Hughes to reach the right-hand byline before floating a centre away from Seaman for Zola to slide the ball into the net.

Leboeuf's departure looked like robbing the match of the promised climax but Winterburn changed that.

● Ian Wright, Patrick Vieira and Steve Walsh have all been reprimanded by the Football Association for their involvement in a bust-up which followed Leicester's 3-3 draw with Arsenal last month. The London club's assistant manager Pat Rice was fined $800 for his part in the angry clash.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Magpies fly high in Europe

A NUMBER of British clubs started their campaign for European glory last week. Newcastle United and Manchester United were in action in the Champions League while Chelsea and Kilmarnock took on their European challengers in the Cup Winners Cup. Six other teams were engaged in the first leg of the opening round of the enlarged Uefa Cup. Two of them, Celtic and Liverpool, played each other in the competition.

Newcastle, playing one of the most important matches in the club's history, produced the most startling result, beating Barcelona 3-2 at St James' Park. The mercurial Colombian, Faustino Asprilla, was the Magpies' hero. He buried Barcelona in a hat-trick of goals in the 22nd, 30th and 48th minutes.

The visitors fought their way back into the game with two goals, the second coming two minutes from time. But Asprilla's third proved a goal too far for the Spanish giants.

Manager Kenny Dalglish said: "Tino will get all the headlines and rightly so, but everyone of the players is a hero. They are all equally important because they went out there and battled really hard."

Manchester United were also in goal-scoring form against Slovakian champions FC Kosice in the small but neat Lokomotive Stadium, where the match took place because Kosice's own ground is being refurbished. United grabbed three against their European opponents, defenders Denis Irwin getting his first for more than a year and Henning Berg his first since joining United from Blackburn Rovers earlier this season. The third came from Andy Cole three minutes from time.

Chelsea turned Stamford Bridge into a shooting gallery against Slovan Bratislava, their final tally being 29 attempts on goal. But the visiting sitting ducks refused to lie down and conceded only two goals.

Kilmarnock endured a torrid time on the Côte d'Azure, having Martin Baker sent off after 73 minutes for two bookable offences as Nice beat them 3-1.

Billed as the Battle of Britain — although several of the players in both teams were from overseas — the Parkhead match between Celtic and Liverpool was a classic clash.

Steve McManaman grabbed a wonder goal for the Merseyside club two minutes from time to deny the Scots victory. The England star was well inside his own half when he got the ball. He dazzled the Celtic defence before coolly curling home a left-foot shot to bring the score level at 2-2. Simon Donnelly had earlier looked to have sealed victory from the penalty spot after David James appeared to pull down Larsson. Michael Owen got Liverpool's first in the sixth minute but the score was levelled by Jackie McNamara in the 53rd minute.

In other Uefa matches, PAOK Salonika defeated Arsenal 1-0. The one-goal deficit going into the Highbury leg gives the Gunners' manager Arsene Wenger cause for optimism.

In Madrid, Leicester's courageous attempt to pull off one of the most startling victories in the history of European football was foiled by a late revival of Atletico Madrid skill, which brought the Spanish side two goals in three minutes of the second half to beat the visiting English side 2-1.

Rangers also found themselves on the losing side, going down to Racing Club Strasbourg 2-1. But the margin makes them favourites to reach the second round. The game between Bordeaux and Aston Villa ended as a goalless draw.

DAMON HILL signed a two-year contract, believed to be worth around $8 million a season, to drive for Jordan from 1998. The world champion's move to Eddie Jordan's Silverstone-based outfit of Eddie Jordan follows Arrow's decision to replace him with Mika Salo of Finland. Jordan have yet to win a grand prix and were left in the lurch after losing a High Court battle with Benetton to retain driver Giancarlo Fisichella of Italy. At Jordan, Hill will team up with Michael Schumacher's younger brother, Ralf.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP:
Aston Villa 2, Derby County 1; Bolton Wanderers 0, Manchester United 0; Chelsea 2, Arsenal 3; Everton 4, Barnsley 2; Leeds United 0, Leicester City 1; Sheffield Wed 0, Coventry City 0, Southampton 1, Liverpool 1; Tottenham Hotspur 0, Blackburn Rovers 0, West Ham United 0, Newcastle United 1; Wimbledon 0, Crystal Palace 1; Liverpool 3, Aston Villa 0.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE
Division One:
Charlton 4, Bradford C 1; Crewe 2, QPR 3; Ipswich 2, Stoke 3; Man City 1, Norwich 2; Middlesbro 3, Birminghm 1; Nottm For 1, Portsmth 0; Oxford 2, Sheff Utd 4; Port Vale 1, Bury 1; Stockport 3, Huddersfld 0; Sunderlnd 1, Wolves 1; Tranmere 6, Reading 0; WBA 0, Swindon 0.

Division Two:
Blackpool 2, Oldham 2; Bristol City 1, Bournemth 1; Burnley 1, Preston 1; Carlisle 2, Plymouth 2; Chesterfld 0, Bristol R 0; Gillingham 2, Watford 2; Grimsby 0, Millwall 1; Luton 2, Wrexham 5; Northmptn 1; Wigan 0; Southend 1, Fulham 0; Walsall 2, York 0.

Division Three:
Barnet 0, Sc'thorpe 1; Darlington 1, Hartlepool 1; Doncaster 0, Cambridge 0; Exeter 3, Rotherham 1; Lincoln 1, Cardiff 0; Mansfield 4, Chester 1; Peterboro 2, Leyton O 0; Rochdale 2, Hull 1; Scarboro 2, Macclesfld 1; Shrewsbry 1, Notts Co 2; Swansea 0, Colchester 1; Torquay 3, Brighton 0.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE
Premier Division:
Celtic 2, Aberdeen 0; Dunfrmline 1, Kilmarnock 1; Hearts 2, Dundee U 1; Motherwell 1, Hibernian 1; St Johnstn 0, Rangers 2.

First Division:
Ayr 1, Raith 0; Dundee 0, Hamilton 2; Falkirk 3, St Mirren 1; Partick 2, Morton 1; Stirling A 0, Airdrie 0.

Second Division:
Clydebank 1, Stenhsmr 0; Clyde 1, Brechin 1; East Fife 2, Livingston 3; Forfar 3, Stranraer 1; Queen Sth 2, Inverness C.

Third Division:
Albion 2, Alloa 1; Arbroath 2, Dumbarton 1; E Stirling 4, Montrose 1; Queens Pk 1, Cowdnbth 0; Ross Co 2, Berwick 0.

Golf British Masters

Turner prize for nerve

Michael Blair

WHILE all bar one were thinking thoughts of Valderrama, Greg Turner of New Zealand last Sunday closed his mind to everything but the British Masters at Forest of Arden, and his clarity of purpose took him to the £125,000 first prize. Rarely has so much money been won by a man so unnoticed.

For up ahead Colin Montgomerie was in his well-rehearsed burn-up mode. Europe's No 1 for the past four seasons played the front nine in 32 and then accelerated. He birdied the 11th and 14th, eagled the 17th and sank a 10-foot putt to birdie the last.

The scoreboard showed a 63 to equal his own course record. The 5th hole has been altered since Montgomerie set the previous mark and, when that was pointed out, he said: "This is a new course record, OK?"

Turner, who had a two-shot lead playing the 17th, made his only mistake there but kept his nerve over the five-foot putt on the 18th which held off Montgomerie by a stroke. He signed off with a 70, was 13 under par overall and a model of consistency over the four, sometimes difficult days. "I don't think I'm needed for the Ryder Cup," he drily observed.

Not that a few Ryder Cup considerations were inappropriate. Thomas Bjorn, furiously brushing up his form for the fray, finished in joint-fourth at eight under par, but he must have been numbed at the speed Montgomerie went past him. It may have accounted for him four-putting the 18th.

No matter where Montgomerie seems to be in a tournament, at some stage he is sure to go into overdrive. Here he was one shot off missing the cut — he had to get up and down from under a tree at the last hole of his second round — and there were even whispered suggestions that, with Valderrama so close, he might not have minded missing the cut.

These moved him first to verbal indignation and then to a practical expression of wrath. Two over at the start of his third round, he was three under at the end of it and from that launch point he played what he described as his best round of the year.

There are three other contenders for the Order of Merit — Ian Woosnam, Bernhard Langer and Darren Clarke — and that was the context in which Montgomerie, now some £80,000 clear, judged his performance.

"Yes, it was so nice to play so well with next Friday's business looming but that", Montgomerie said gravely, "is another ball game."

● Britain's Laura Davies completed her third victory of the season and the 52nd of her career when she shot a closing-round 74 to capture the Hennessy Cup at Refrath, Cologne, last Sunday.